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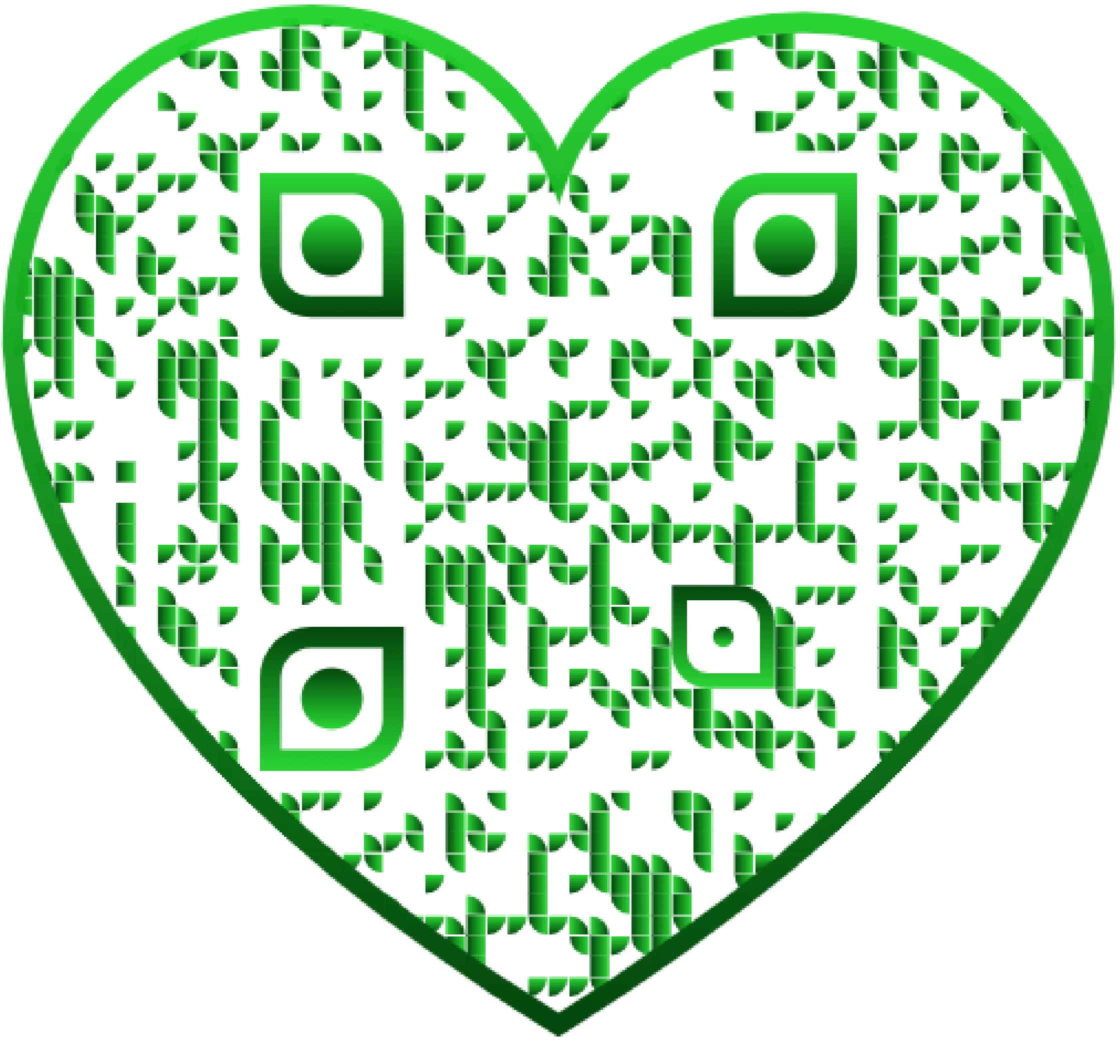

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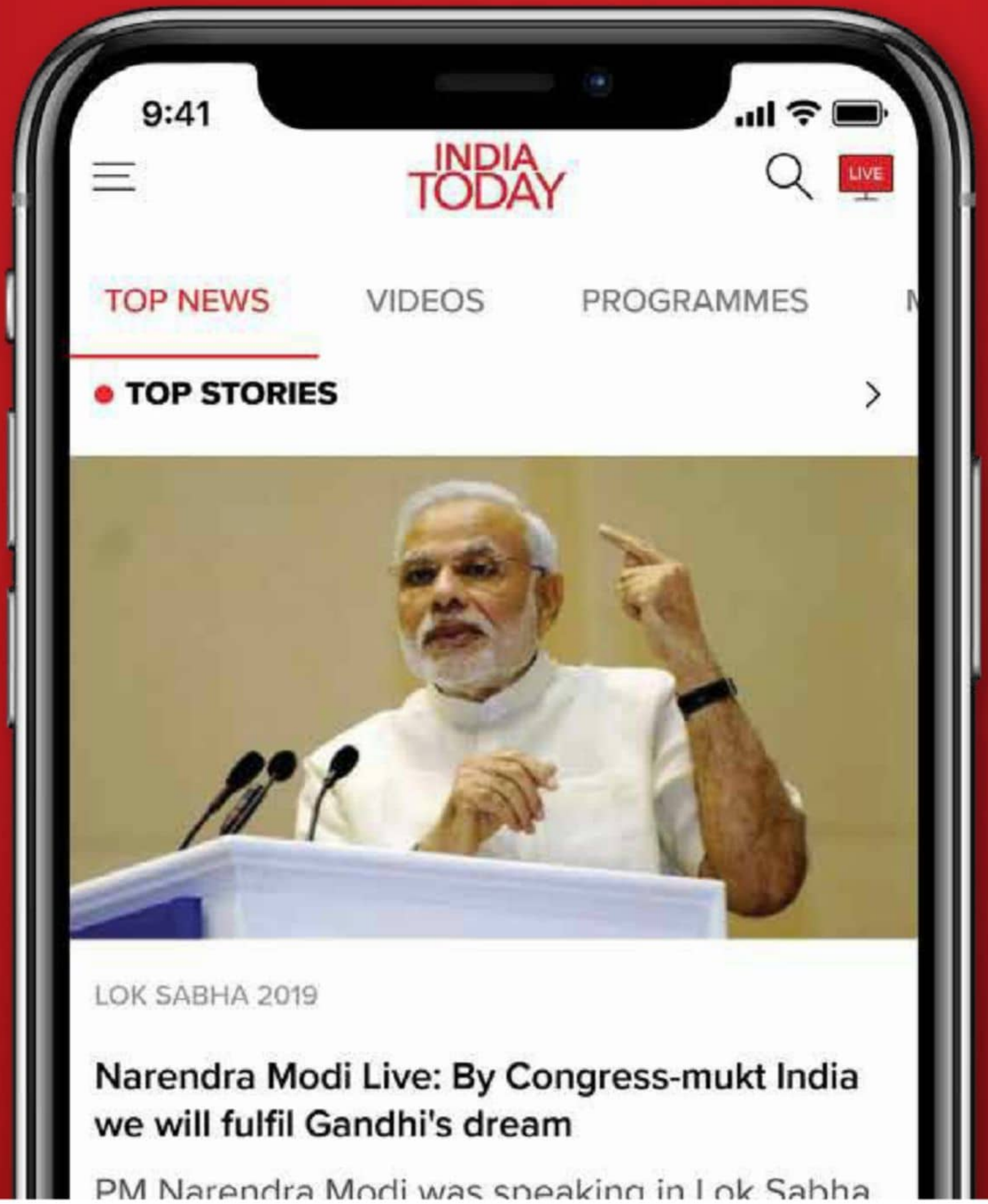
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Editorial

Skoda & Volkswagen commence India product offensive

The VW Group company Skoda Auto Volkswagen India is ratcheting up its game in the country after the launch of the Skoda Kylaq. Before the company comes up with a VW parallel for the sub-4m SUV, it is launching a slew of imported and assembled vehicles under both its brands. It started off with the launch of the Skoda Kodiaq and is following up with the launches of the VW Tiguan R-Line that will be succeeded by the VW Golf GTI. Under the Skoda brand, the second generation Kodiaq will be followed by the Superb and the Octavia along with its RS variant and we will be seeing the first electric cars from both the brands – the Enyaq and the ID.4. The earlier SUVs in the form of the Kushaq and the Taigun both will undergo facelifts and then the sedans will go under the scalpel. With a full pipeline and clear plans and product lines sorted the future is looking good for SAVWIPL.

In this packed issue, amongst the number of drives we have the first impressions of the VW Tiguan R-Line as the second of the SAVWIPL vehicles that we will be driving over the next few months. While we have an extremely sporty SUV on one hand, we have an epitome of comfort on the other in the form of the Toyota Vellfire that has moved up a few notches in terms of luxury and comfort and we have driven that as well. Also in terms of cutting-edge tech and a good amalgam of comfort and performance is the Kia flagship EV, the EV9 SUV that we have driven in India. As far as electrics go, we also have a couple of electric two wheelers as well – one from a global legacy player in Honda and the other one from an EV start-up, Revolt. And we also have one of the most accessible electric cars in the country, the Tata Tiago.ev.

There is a whole lot of two wheelers as well, starting with one of front-runners to be a one of the best all-rounders in the country in terms of efficiency and design, the Xoom 125 from Hero as it strives to strengthen its hold on the Indian and global two wheeler markets.

So enjoy this issue of AUTO TODAY and we will be back with a lot more next month. Until then, drive safe, always wear a seat-belt no matter where you are seated in the car and always wear a helmet when on a two wheeler.

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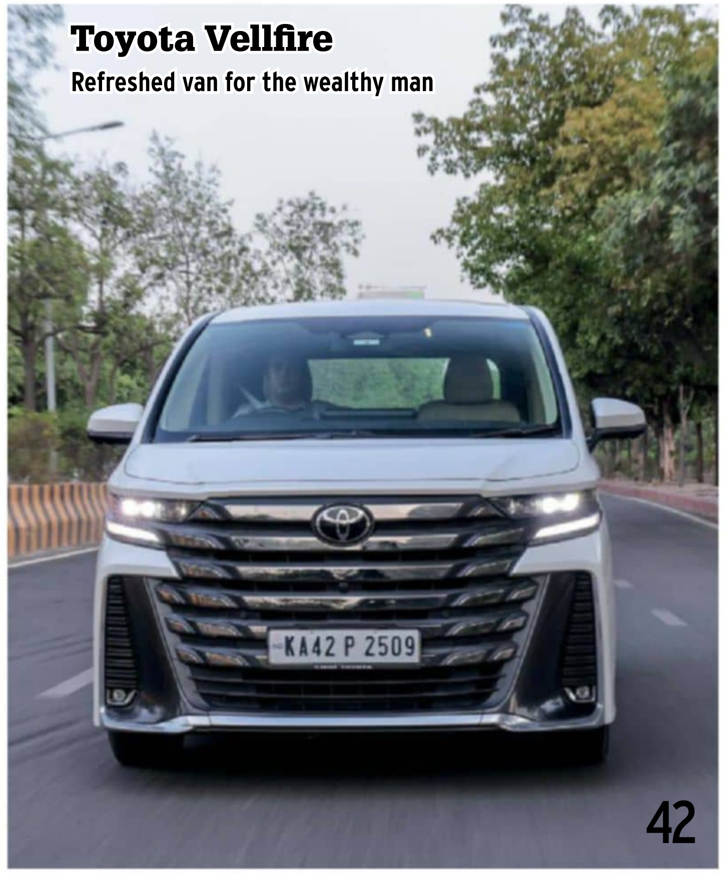

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ARRIVEDERCI SPECIALE

There is no standard Ferrari, each car to leave Maranello is special, but then the brand alleviates some of its models to a higher stature, designated by names such as Speciale, Competizione, Pista and 'XX' monikers, and these are the real deal. And now following up on the 458 Speciale, we have the 296 Speciale. The formula is the same as before, more power, reduced weight and track-biased upgrades. Power from the 3.0-litre twin-turbocharged V6 and its electric motor supplement have been boosted to 880bhp, while the downforce has been increased by 20 per cent, and is 60kg lighter compared to the GTB. The 296 Speciale and Speciale Aperta are record breakers for Ferrari, they are the most powerful RWD Ferraris, and have the highest specific power of any RWD Ferrari.

LEAPING INTO the Indian EV space

As India's burgeoning electric vehicle space gets ready for meteoric growth, more global brands are looking to stake their claim. **Dipayan Dutta** lays down a roadmap of what consumers can expect

The Stellantis group is looking to expand its footprint in the sub-continent through a multi-pronged approach that includes increasing the products on offer from brands like Jeep, Maserati and Citroen that already sell vehicles in India, in this next phase, will bring another brand from their global portfolio to cover a wider audience. This time around, it's the most recent brand to join under Stellantis, Leapmotor. This Chinese start-up was acquired by the group in 2023 through an investment of USD 1.5 billion or roughly Rs 12,532 crore, to acquire approximately 21 per cent equity in Leapmotor, which was at the time ranked amongst the top three EV start-ups out of China. Last year, we reported that Leapmotor would make its foray into the European market with 200 touch points in consideration for their initial phase, while considering the brand's viability in other markets across the world.

Now it appears that Leapmotor is all set to make headway into the Indian electric vehicle space. Leapmotor will be brought to India as Leapmotor International – a Stellantis-led 51:49 joint venture with exclusive rights for exporting, selling and manufacturing Leapmotor products outside China. Although at this juncture, the exact production and sales strategy of the brand is still under speculation, initial models will likely make it to India through the completely knocked-down (CKD) route to be assembled out of the Stellantis' Ranjangaon plant in Maharashtra. At least until the brand can identify and create a roadmap for further localisation. In this first phase of operations, our sources within the group hint at the brand making serious considerations on launching the T03 hatchback, which will be positioned as an entry-level electric that will go up against the likes of the MG Comet and the Tata Tiago.ev.

The brand is also likely to introduce a C-segment SUV, the C10, that is likely to take on the likes of Maruti Suzuki e Vitara and the Hyundai Creta Electric. It is also our understanding that Leapmotor's expansion plans in the country will include a total of six electric vehicles that will be on sale in India as early as 2027. Leapmotor is likely to operate through the existing dealer network of Stellantis India, which should benefit the brand not only in revitalising sub-optimal footfall but also by reducing their initial establishment costs, a benefit that should filter down to the consumer and make Leapmotor vehicles more competitive.

> LIKELY TO INTRODUCE A C-SEGMENT SUV, THE C10, THAT IS LIKELY TO TAKE ON THE LIKES OF E VITARA AND THE CRETA ELECTRIC

Lamborghini's latest baby bull is here

LAMBORGHINI NOW has its full model range on sale in India, with the latest entrant being the Temerario. This is the replacement for the Huracan, Lamborghini's most successful sports coupe. The biggest change compared to its predecessors, is that instead of the V10 this comes with a smaller 4.0-litre V8 with twin-turbochargers. This is not a downgrade as far as performance is concerned, as this engine revs to a screaming 10,000rpm and produces 800bhp on its own, and is aided by three electric motors. Two of these are present at the front axle, and one in the transmission tunnel, and this means that the Lamborghini has access to 920bhp. It can accelerate from 0 to 100kmph in just 2.7 seconds and top speed sits above 340kmph. The hexagonal aesthetic is present all over, most prominently in form of the LED DRLs mounted on the lower bumper. The front features a low end, with twin headlamps, a muscular bumper and a large splitter. On the sides, the Temerario gets a more aerodynamic design, with more downforce, while the rear is characterised by a central mounted exhaust, a large diffuser and hexagonal LED taillamps. There is a small battery pack too, that allows the Temerario to run on pure electric mode.

TEMERARIO
TEMERARIO

Francesco Scardaoni, region director Asia Paciific, Automobili Lamborghini at the launch of the Temerario in New Delhi

MG Windsor to get bigger battery

JSW MG MOTOR INDIA will soon be adding a new variant to the Windsor, called the Pro. This will sit above the current Windsor, and the major change will be a larger battery pack. The standard Windsor comes with a 38kWh battery pack, but the Windsor Pro is expected to be offered with a larger pack, likely to be a 50.6kWh pack. This would give it an ARAI certified range of 450-500km on a single charge. The electric motor however is likely to remain the same, with 136bhp and 200Nm of torque. The Pro will also come with extra features such as ADAS, new alloys and some added tech upgrades. Alongside this, MG is expected to slightly differ the Windsor and Windsor Pro, with minor changes to the exterior and interior. For the last few months, MG Windsor has been the highest selling EV in India, outselling the former leader, Tata Nexon EV.

Tata Nexon reaffirms safety, achieves top score

TATA NEXON HAS continued its stellar performance at Bharat NCAP, with the 45kWh variant also scoring top results, achieving a 5-star safety rating. The 45kWh variant of the Nexon scored 29.86 points out of 32 in Adult Occupant Protection (AOP) and 44.95 points out of 49 in Child Occupant Protection (COP). With this, the entire Nexon EV portfolio has scored full 5-stars at BNCAP. The Nexon EV Empowered+ LR variant was tested by BNCAP. It scored 14.26 out of 16 points in offset deformable barrier test. BNCAP gave the SUV 23.95 points in the COP category, dynamic score. The Child Restraint System installation category was awarded full marks, 12 points.

BMW M Drift Academy for the enthusiasts

BMW INDIA has announced the BMW M Drift Academy, marking the first entry of the brand into this realm in India. This has been designed for enthusiasts and will host events across multiple cities. BMW M2 and M4 models will be used to teach drifting to the participants, with expert instructors from BMW Germany to coach. The Drift Pilots training course includes mastery in controlling and exiting a drift, throttle control, performing and exiting a half-circle drift and performing and maintaining a full-circle drift in both clockwise and anti-clockwise directions. The 3.5 hour long Drift Academy will also award successful participants with Red Badges from the BMW M Academy, as a mark of their certified drifting skills.

Syros becomes first Kia to score 5 stars at BNCAP

KIA SYROS has become the first model from the Korean automaker to score a full 5-star rating at BNCAP. The SUV has scored 30.21 out of 32 points in the Adult Occupant Protection category (AOP) and 44.42 out of 49 points in the Child Occupant Protection (COP) category. BNCAP tested the top-spec HTX+ petrol DCT and the HTK (O) petrol manual variants of the Syros. The 5-star safety ratings apply to all petrol variants of the Syros as the safety suite is standard for the model range. BNCAP says that the Syros offers good protection to the passenger's head and neck but only adequate protection to the driver's chest and knee. It scored 14.21 out of 16.00 points in the frontal offset deformable barrier test, and scored 16.00 out of 16.00 points in the side movable deformable barrier test.

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Two more Marutis get updated

MARUTI SUZUKI has updated the Wagon R and Eeco for the 2025 model year. Mainly the update has focused on increasing the safety aspects of the two vehicles, the addition of six airbags standard across the range. Additionally, both Eeco and Wagon R get three-point seatbelts for all passengers. Along with this, the 7-seater variant of the Eeco has been discontinued in favour of a new six-seat variant, that comes with captain seats for the second row. The Wagon R continues with the same 1 and 1.2-litre engines as before, both of which are now E20 compliant. The Eeco meanwhile continues with the 1.2-litre petrol motor and makes 80bhp, and is also E20 fuel compliant.

Toyota Hyryder gets 2025 MY update

TOYOTA HAS introduced the 2025 model year update for the Urban Cruiser Hyryder. The base variant now starts at Rs 11.34 lakh (ex-showroom), an increase of Rs 20,000 compared to before. Top-variants of the Hyryder now come with 8-way power adjustable driver's seats, front ventilated seats, sunshades for rear doors as well as ambient lighting. Some trims also gets an AQI monitor, TPMS, LED reading lamps and 15W USB-C charging ports. Safety has been enhanced pan model range of the SUV - with six airbags now standard across the range, and automatic trims now benefiting from an EPB. The AWD V variant of the Hyryder can now be opted for with a 6-speed automatic, replacing the 5-speed manual shifter. Most trims of the Hyryder have received a price hike, between Rs 10,000 to Rs 25,000.

Dual-cylinder Exter CNG gets EX trim

HYUNDAI HAS launched the Exter EX Hy-CNG Duo at Rs 7.51 lakh (ex-showroom). This makes the Hy-CNG Duo Exter available at a lower price point, earlier starting from Rs 8.64 lakh (ex-showroom). Power comes from the same 1.2-litre petrol motor that makes 83bhp and 114Nm of torque in petrol mode and 69bhp and 95.2Nm of torque in CNG mode, and comes mates solely to a 5-speed manual gearbox. The EX trim comes with H-shaped LED taillamps, digital instrumentation with a 4.2-inch MID, drivers seat adjustment, six airbags and keyless entry.

Second-generation Skoda Kodiaq launched

SKODA HAS launched the second-generation Kodiaq, available in Laurin & Klement (L&K) and Sportline trims. As before, the Kodiaq is assembled locally in India. Design wise, it is an evolution of the older car, with less sharp elements. It gets split headlamps, with new LED DRLs that continue to the grille, which itself has illumination. While it retains the 2,791mm wheelbase, the Kodiaq is now 59mm longer. It rides on 18-inch wheels that get aero-optimised wheel covers. At the rear it gets slim C-shaped tail lamps and a connected LED strip. The cabin has been heavily updated for the new-gen SUV. The dashboard houses a new 13-inch floating infotainment display, along with three dials for the climate control. The driver gets a 10-inch panel with navigation and a new steering (two-spoke in L&K, three-spoke in Sportline). Features on the Kodiaq include ambient lighting, panoramic sunroof, wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, 3-zone climate control, 13-speaker Canton audio system and powered seats with heating/ventilation and massage functions. Kodiaq is offered with a single powertrain, a 2.0-litre turbo-petrol motor that makes 204bhp and 320Nm of torque, mated to a 7-speed DCT, with the power being sent to all the wheels. The Kodiaq is priced at Rs 46.89 lakh for the Sportline and Rs 48.69 for the L&K trim (prices ex-showroom). It arrives in the country via the CKD route.

Petr Janeba, brand director, Skoda India with the second-generation Kodiaq

Suzuki to set up Osamu Suzuki Centre of Excellence

SUZUKI MOTOR CORPORATION and Maruti Suzuki India Limited have announced plans to set up Osamu Suzuki Centre of Excellence (OSCOE) to honour late Osamu Suzuki. The former leader of Suzuki brought Japanese manufacturing concepts that in essence led to the massive growth of the Indian automotive industry. To recognise his contribution and of Japanese concepts, the Centre of Excellence are being set up in Gujarat and Haryana. OSCOE will work towards fulfilling objectives like supporting national high manufacturing growth, raising standard of component manufacturers, to make supply chains of the country globally competitive, build infrastructure and develop programmes in collaboration with academia to propagate Japanese manufacturing philosophy.

Kia reveals Clavis, premium MPV based on the Carens

KIA HAS revealed its upcoming model, the Clavis. This isn't a new model, but an improved version of the Carens MPV, aimed at being premium. It gets a new face, redesigned headlamps. The interior is expected to feature new colours, and some added features for the rear passengers. It is also likely to get ADAS, as Carens remains the only Kia car to not feature an ADAS suite. Mechanically, the Clavis is expected to use the same powertrains - the 115bhp naturally-aspirted petrol, the 160bhp turbo-petrol and the 116bhp diesel. Both the turbo-petrol and diesel engines come with automatic transmission options.

Carens Clavis

BYD Seal and Atto 3 updated for 2025, variants rejigged

BYD HAS launched the 2025 model year update for the Seal and Atto 3. The mid-spec Premium variant of the Seal features FSD (Frequency Selective Damping), while the Performance trim gets DiSus-C system. All variants now come with a powered sunshade, as well as wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. BYD also added a new Lithium Iron Phosphate (LFP) battery pack, that gets a 15-year lifespan. The Seal Premium is now priced at Rs 45.70 lakh (ex-showroom), while the Seal Performance now costs Rs 53.15 lakh (ex-showroom). The Atto 3 SUV meanwhile gets an all-black cabin, updated with ventilated front seats, while updates have been made to the battery pack, same as the Seal sedan. The Atto 3 Dynamic with the smaller 49.92kWh battery is priced at Rs 24.99 lakh (ex-showroom), while the Premium and Superior variants, with the larger 60.48kWh pack cost Rs 29.85 lakh and Rs 33.99 lakh, respectively.

Porsche Macan S & GTS discontinued

PORSCHE HAS revised the ICE-powered Macan lineup in India, with the discontinuation of the S and GTS variants. This comes as a result of the current-gen Macan being phased out globally, and is likely to be discontinued completely by next year. The only Macan on sale now is the base variant, that comes with a 2.0-litre turbo-petrol motor churns out 265bhp and 400Nm of torque. This is capable of launching this performance-oriented SUV from a standstill to 100kmph in just 6.4 seconds. The sole Macan on sale is priced at Rs 96.05 lakh (ex-showroom). Porsche's line-up includes models several models from the 911, 718, Cayenne, Macan, Panamera and Taycan range.

Hyundai, Indian Oil join hands to test FCEVs

HYUNDAI MOTOR INDIA LIMITED and Indian Oil Corporation have signed an MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) to explore the viability of mass usage of Fuel Cell Electric Vehicles (FCEVs) that run on hydrogen fuel cells. The two companies will evaluate the lifespan and operational reliability of hydrogen powered cars over a period of two years. As part of the collaboration, Hyundai has handed over one unit of the Nexo hydrogen FCEV to Indian Oil to conduct the testing. The testing process will include running over 40,000km, total cost of ownership assessment, over two years. This is essentially a test to evaluate the benefits of FCEV, and corresponding infrastructure as well as the economic and environmental benefits.

Hyundai's Puneet Anand, AVP & vertical head- Corporate Affairs, Corporate Communications & Social and Jeongick Lee, function head- Corporte Affairs along with Indian Oil's Umish Srivastava, ED - TPF and Alok Sharma, director - R&D flagging off the Hyundai NEXO FCEV

2025 Evoque launched in Autobiography trim

THE RANGE ROVER EVOQUE has received the 2025 model year update, adding more features and tech to the smallest Range Rover, as well as the discontinuation of the Dynamic SE and the introduction of the Autobiography. As before, it is brought to India as a CKD. The Evoque Autobiography sits above the Dynamic SE, and gets additional kit, such as a sliding panoramic sunroof, a 14-speaker 650W Meridian audio system, extra leather upholstery, camera-based IRVM, seat cover options, electronically adjustable steering and a suede roof liner. The Evoque is available with one petrol and one diesel option. The 2.0-litre turbo-petrol makes 250bhp and 365Nm of torque while the 2.0-litre diesel makes 204bhp and 430Nm of torque. Both come paired with a 9-speed automatic and AWD system as standard. The new Range Rover Evoque Autobiography is priced at Rs 69.50 lakh (ex-showroom), a price hike of Rs 1.6 lakh compared to the older Dynamic SE.

Mercedes celebrates production milestone

MERCEDES-BENZ INDIA has reached the manufacturing milestone of 2,00,000th locally produced car from its Chakan plant. The 2,00,000th model, an EQS SUV was rolled off the assembly line. Mercedes-Benz commenced local assembly in 1995, and the first 50,000 cars rolled off in 19 years, in 2014, post which the next 1,00,000 units came in the next nine years and last 50,000 units in just over two years time. Mercedes-Benz produces the A-Class, C-Class, E-Class LWB, S-Class, Mercedes-Maybach S 580, GLA, GLC, GLE, GLS EQS 580 sedan and EQS 580 SUV in India.

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Dr Jorg Burzer, member of the Board of Management of Mercedes-Benz Group AG, Santosh Iyer, MD and CEO, Mercedes-Benz India and Vyankatesh Kulkarni, executive director and head of operations, Mercedes-Benz India.

Mercedes-AMG GT returning to India

MERCEDES WILL bring the new-gen Mercedes-AMG GT to our shores. It will arrive in the 63 and 63 Pro variants, marking the return of the flagship AMG to India. Power comes from the same 4.0-litre twin-turbo V8 making 585bhp and 800Nm of torque in the 63, and 612bhp and 850Nm on the 63 Pro, mated to a new 9-speed DCT and 4Matic+ AWD. Mercedes claims that the new GT 63 can sprint from 0 to 100kmph in just 3.2 seconds which is the same in the 63 Pro and to a top speed of 315kmph. The AMG GT 63 and 63 Pro are likely to be priced upwards of Rs 3 crore (ex-showroom).

Defender V8 Soft Top brings in the old charm

LAND ROVER CLASSIC has revealed the Defender V8 Soft Top, a modern version of the Defender 90. This isn't a new car, Land Rover essentially uses a Defender 90 made between 2012 and 2016 as a donor car, then reworks it. Personalisation options are plenty, it gets 49 paint options and four options for the soft-top roof. The removable roof can be opted for between a 'Bikini Hood' that covers just the front seats, or a full roof. Inside, the legacy has been retained with the same switches and dash layout. This too can be personalised, with thirteen upholstery options, as well as a wine chiller. The V8 is a 5.0-litre unit, that has been upgraded to 2025 standards, it makes 400bhp and 515Nm of torque and comes paired to an 8-speed automatic. It also gets coil springs, Bilstein dampers, Eibach anti-roll bars and upgraded alcon brakes.

Mercedes previews next-gen V-Class with Vision V concept

MERCEDES-BENZ HAS revealed the Vision V concept, that is based on the brand's new VAN.EA (van architecture). This previews the next V-Class, and its electric counterpart. A smooth silhouette makes up most of the design elements of the Vision V, with a large closed off grille up front with a connected LED headlamps and illuminated Mercedes logo. Along the sides, it is curvy, and gets sliding doors for the rear passengers as well as aero-grade alloys. At the rear the van gets large square shaped LED strips, with a glass panel at the centre. The concept has an all white interior, and gets unique tube-cushioned seats, while the dashboard houses an advanced version of the MBUX superscreen. The second row, or simply the lounge of the van gets a cavernous space with fully-reclining lounge seats. There is a 65-inch 4K retractable display that can run games, and is paired to a 42-speaker Dolby Atmos audio system. Mechanical details of the Vision V are still under wraps, but the VAN.EA concept supports 800V electric architecture along with front-wheel-drive and four-wheel-drive, with range up to 500km on a single charge.

Hyundai debuts new hybrid tech

HYUNDAI HAS revealed its new-gen hybrid system, that debuts with the Palisade. This system uses two electric motors inside the transmission, one works as the starter and one as the traction motor, that can be combined to a range of internal combustion engines. According to the brand, this system allows smooth gear shifts, reduced noise and vibrations, and can be specced to use rear wheel drive or all-wheel-drive. Unlike other hybrids, this has also taken inspiration from E-GMP electric platforms, and offers certain 'electric' features such as a 'Stay Mode' that utilises aircon and infotainment with the engine off.

New ES gets electric power

LEXUS HAS revealed the latest-gen ES sedan, which for the first time debuts with an electric powertrain. Available in two variants, the ES 350e that gets a 225bhp front-mounted motor and the 550e that gets AWD and 343bhp. According to Lexus, the former has a range of 685km on a single charge and the latter can go up to 610km on a single charge according to CLTC. It also gets two hybrid options, including the ES 300h and 350h, both with four-cylinder petrol engines. The design has mainly been inspired by the LF-ZC concept. Inside, the Lexus cabin experience has been overhauled with a display based UI.

Audi A6 sedan moves to new generation

AUDI HAS revealed the new-gen A6 sedan for the global markets. This debuts an all-new design ethos for one of Audi's most vital models. The front gets large honeycomb grille, with slim LED DRLs and headlamps, and a sleeker design overall. Over to the sides, it resembles the older A6, but the shoulder line rises up at the rear, giving it a raised rear, fastback appearance. At the rear, the A6 gets a full width LED light, and and a split tailgate/lower bumper setup. Audi has added optional kit for the A6 that includes all-wheel steering, although this is likely only to be offered on the V6 variant. Inside, the A6 gets a tech-based cabin with three displays, that serve as the main command hub for the sedan. It continues with same powertrain options as before.

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THE POWER THAT ALWAYS STEALS THE SHOW

Built on Trust & Technology:
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Committed to India's Journey:
As India's mobility landscape evolves, ENEOS India stays ahead with a growing distribution network and a strong commitment to quality. We're here to support every drive, with lubricants engineered for performance, endurance, and change.

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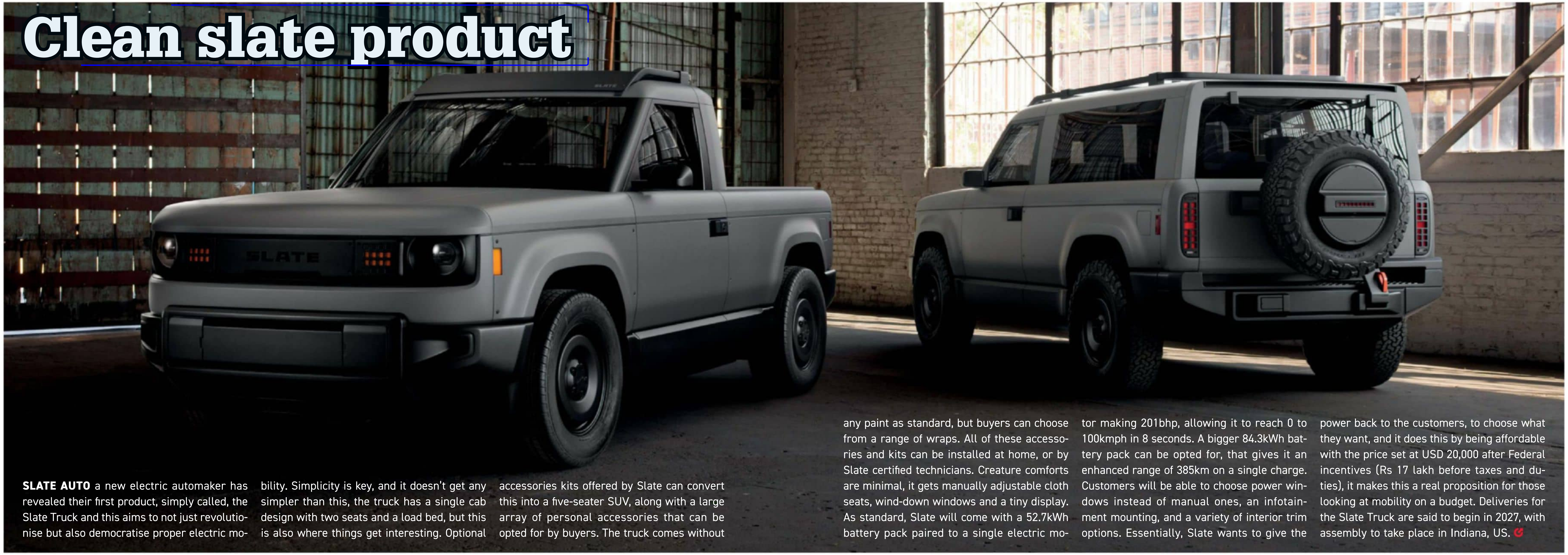
Clean slate product



SLATE AUTO a new electric automaker has revealed their first product, simply called, the Slate Truck and this aims to not just revolutionise but also democratise proper electric mobility. Simplicity is key, and it doesn't get any simpler than this, the truck has a single cab design with two seats and a load bed, but this is also where things get interesting. Optional accessories kits offered by Slate can convert this into a five-seater SUV, along with a large array of personal accessories that can be opted for by buyers. The truck comes without any paint as standard, but buyers can choose from a range of wraps. All of these accessories and kits can be installed at home, or by Slate certified technicians. Creature comforts are minimal, it gets manually adjustable cloth seats, wind-down windows and a tiny display. As standard, Slate will come with a 52.7kWh battery pack paired to a single electric motor making 201bhp, allowing it to reach 0 to 100kmph in 8 seconds. A bigger 84.3kWh battery pack can be opted for, that gives it an enhanced range of 385km on a single charge. Customers will be able to choose power windows instead of manual ones, an infotainment mounting, and a variety of interior trim options. Essentially, Slate wants to give the power back to the customers, to choose what they want, and it does this by being affordable with the price set at USD 20,000 after Federal incentives (Rs 17 lakh before taxes and duties), it makes this a real proposition for those looking at mobility on a budget. Deliveries for the Slate Truck are said to begin in 2027, with assembly to take place in Indiana, US.

BMW rolls out four-cylinder M2 for racing

BMW HAS revealed the M2 Racing, meant to compete in motorsport events from next year. The biggest talking point here is the replacement of the regular M2's S58 six-cylinder, with the B48 2.0-litre turbocharged four-cylinder. This has mainly been done to keep costs low. Amongst its upgrades is the lighter body, racing suspension, custom body parts as well as a carbon roof. The M2 Racing has access to 304bhp and 420Nm of torque. It also gets a mechanical limited-slip differential, KW shocks and BMW M Compound brakes. Inside, the car gets a Sabelt GT-AM racing seat, FIA-homologated roll cage, and a fire extinguisher. Customers can opt for a passenger seat, but air conditioning is standard. The M2 Racing will be seen racing in global competitions from next year.

Limited-run 911 reignites the 70s

PORSCHE HAS taken the wraps off the 911 Spirit 70, a limited-run 911 Carrera GTS Cabriolet. Limited to only 1,500 units, this gets retro paint, racing stripes and 'Pasha' cabin trim. It comes with Olive Neo paint, along with Bronzite on some lower sections as well as iconic 'Fuchs-style' wheels. Being a cabriolet, it gets a blacked out soft top as well. Inside, the 911 gets Pasha pattern for the seats, door panels and upholstery, with black and Olive Neo colours that match the exterior. This is mixed with modern 911 bits like the 12.65-inch digital display with classic gauges, scales and green digits. The Sport Chrono stopwatch has green digits and white hands. Mechanically it continues with the T-Hybrid system that gets a 3.6-litre flat-six motor, making 526bhp and 609Nm of torque.

Royal Enfield Hunter 350 gets first major update

ROYAL ENFIELD has updated its highest-selling model, the Hunter 350, for 2025, making it the first major update since it was first introduced. Changes to the model start with the rear suspension, which is now a progressive spring instead of the linear one used earlier, which is paired with a new routing for the exhaust, leading to an increase in ground clearance by 10mm. The motorcycle also has a new seat with the same profile but higher foam density, increasing comfort. On the feature front, the biggest addition is the slip-assist clutch, which is now standard. Along with that, the Hunter 350 now gets an LED headlamp, a digi-analogue instrument cluster with a tripper pod, and a USB Type-C charger. The roadster remains the same on the mechanical and powertrain front as it is still powered by a 349cc air-cooled J-series motor that delivers a relaxed 20.2bhp and 27Nm that is mated to a 5-speed gearbox. Prices of the Hunter 350 now start at Rs 1.50 lakh (ex-showroom) for the base variant, with the middle variant costing Rs 1.77 lakh (ex-showroom) and the top model costing Rs 1.82 lakh (ex-showroom).

2025 Hero Karizma XMR variant lineup rejigged

HERO MOTOCORP has launched the 2025 Karizma XMR 210 in India, introducing two new variants. The first of these is the 'Top' variant that adds features like a USD fork and a 4.2-inch TFT display from the Xpulse 210. On the other hand, the range-topping 'Combat' variant brings in a grey and yellow colourway. Price for the base variant remains the same at Rs 1.81 lakh (ex-showroom), while the Top variant demands a Rs 19,000 premium over it, and the Combat variant is costlier by Rs 21,000.

Moto Morini X-Cape 700 succeeds the X-Cape 650 internationally

MOTOR MORINI globally took the wraps off the X-Cape 700, the successor to the X-Cape 650. The motorcycle is now compliant with the newest Euro 5+ norms, which has led to the engine capacity to increase from 649cc to 693cc while the power and torque outputs are also up by 10bhp and 14Nm. The new version brings some changes to the design, which include a new livery and updated front end, along with a new windscreen and decreased bezels on the 7-inch TFT display. The motorcycle also has a new seat that has increased the seat height by 10mm. Other changes include a new Ebony Black colour and a longer exhaust. Talking of numbers, the X-Cape 700 weighs 213kg now and has a ground clearance of 190mm. It uses a set of Brembo callipers consisting of a 298mm dual-disc setup at the front and a 255mm disc at the rear for braking.

TVS updates RR 310 with more features and a new colour option

THE TVS APACHE RR 310 has been updated to cater to the OBD2B emission norms, receiving some feature additions and a new colour option in the process. The motorcycle rides on the same 8-spoke alloy wheels found in the RTR 310, while offering more electronic rider aids to the users, including launch control and cornering drag torque control as standard. Other than this, the RR 310 now has a longer list of features, including sequential turn signal lamps (TSL) and a gen-2 race computer with multiple language support.

Furthermore, you can buy the Apache RR 310 in a new Sepang Blue colour scheme. Prices start at Rs. 2.78 lakh (ex-showroom) for the Red variant without the quickshifter, while the same with the quickshifter can be bought for Rs. 2.95 lakh (ex-showroom).

Hero Splendor+ is now OBD2B compliant

HERO MOTOCORP has launched the 2025 range of the Splendor+ in India. The model is now available in three variants: Splendor+, Splendor+ Xtec and Splendor+ Xtec 2.0 and adheres to the OBD2B norms. The Xtec 2.0 model now comes with features like an LED headlight and a Bluetooth-enabled digi-analogue instrument cluster. All the variants have become dearer by Rs 1,750, with the base Plus range starting from Rs 78,926 (ex-showroom) while the top-of-the-line Plus Xtec 2.0 variant costs Rs 85,501 (ex-showroom).

2025 Yamaha Aerox 155 launched with new colour

YAMAHA HAS launched the 2025 iteration of the Aerox in India by introducing some design updates to the scooter and making it compliant to the new emission norms. The most significant upgrade is the new Ice Fluo Vermillion colourway in the S variant, which replaces the Grey Vermillion. Furthermore, the Racing Blue trim now has changed graphics, while the standard can be bought in Metallic Black. The scooter has no change on the powertrain front, as it continues to use a 155cc, liquid-cooled, single-cylinder engine that puts out 14.75bhp and 13.9Nm and is now compliant with the latest OBD2B emission norms. The 2025 Aerox 155 starts at Rs 1.50 lakh (ex-showroom) for the base variant, an increase of Rs 3,000, while the S variant gets a Rs 2,000 price bump, now retailing at Rs 1.53 lakh (ex-showroom).

KTM halts production at Austria plant once again

KTM HAS stopped production at its Austrian plant due to the shortage of essential components and parts required for manufacturing. The firm's CEO, Gottfried Neumeister, announced this decision to the employees on April 24 while telling them about a 30-hour workweek with a cut in wages. This is the second time the automaker has halted production at its Mattighofen facility, which restarted production in early April, with only 4,200 motorcycles being produced in this time.

Skoda reimagines the Slavia B as a cafe racer concept

SKODA TOOK the wraps off a unique concept motorcycle based on the Slavia B called the Laurin & Klement Slavia B. The cafe racer pays homage to the Slavia B, which was launched back in 1899. Skoda started its journey with motorcycles and bicycles under the Laurin and Klement badge. The Czech brand wants to revive that legacy with this new series, designed by French designer Romain Bucaille, who serves as Skoda's in-house designer. The Slavia B concept introduces electric energy to the traditional Skoda two-wheeler design, leaving space where the 240cc, air-cooled engine of the vintage Slavia B was placed. While the original sold in small numbers the concept is not expected to make it to production.

2025 Ducati Scrambler Full Throttle arrives in India

DUCATI HAS launched the 2025 iteration of the Scrambler Full Throttle in India with updates to its design and a new black and bronze paint scheme. It derives its power from an 803cc L-Twin engine, which puts out 73bhp and 65.2Nm of peak torque and is paired to a six-speed gearbox with a bi-directional quickshifter. It has 41mm KYB USD forks at the front and a KYB pre-load adjustable mono-shock at the rear with a 150mm travel on both ends. With features like a 4.3-inch TFT display, ride-by-wire and two ride modes, the Scrambler Full Throttle is priced at Rs 12.60 lakh (ex-showroom).

2025 Honda Dio 125 brings a price bump and OBD2B compliance

THE HONDA DIO 125 has been updated for 2025, making it OBD2B compliant while also getting feature additions. It is powered by the same 124cc single-cylinder air-cooled motor found in the Activa 125 that makes 8.3bhp and 10.5Nm of torque. The engine now has start/stop technology to increase fuel efficiency. The scooter now sports the same 4.2-inch TFT display from the petrol-powered Activa, which can be paired to smartphones via the Honda RoadSync Duo app. The base variant of the scooter costs Rs 96,749 (ex-showroom) while the H-Smart costs Rs 1.02 lakh (ex-showroom).

Classic Legends to launch updated Yezdi Adventure next month

YEZDI
69
adventure

CLASSIC LEGENDS is all set to launch the updated Yezdi Adventure in India next month. This comes around a year after the firm had updated the motorcycle, with the 2025 edition expected to get a new design, better performance and more features. The engine of the Yezdi Adventure is likely to get OBD2B compliance. The 334cc single-cylinder, liquid-cooled mill churns out 29.2bhp and 29.8Nm of peak torque and is paired to a six-speed gearbox. The motorcycle is expected to continue with features like USB Type-C charging, Bluetooth connectivity, a three-mode ABS (road, rain, off-road), and turn-by-turn navigation. It remains to be seen if the Yezdi Adventure will continue to be sold at its current price range of Rs 2.10 lakh to Rs 2.20 lakh (ex-showroom).

Ducati Panigale V4 given the Lamborghini touch

DUCATI HAS partnered with Lamborghini again for another special edition based on the Panigale V4 S. This is the third such project made by both Italian brands and will be limited to 693 units worldwide, of which 63 more units are reserved for Lamborghini Ad Personam owners who can customise it to match their Revuelto. The other 630 units get a black and green livery with the number '63' commemorating Lamborghini's founding year: 1963. This livery gets a tail section and winglets inspired by the lines of the Revuelto. It has exposed carbon fibre at the fairing, tail section, front and rear mudguard and exhaust cove while also getting a homologated Akrapovič titanium under-belly exhaust with a carbon-fibre tip. This exhaust gives a 2.5bhp boost to the motorcycle that is 2kg lighter than the Panigale V4 S.

Indian Motorcycle reveals two new limited-edition models

INDIAN MOTORCYCLE has unveiled the Challenger Elite and Pursuit Elite internationally. Limited to 350 and 250 units respectively, the models share the same 1,834cc V-twin engine and feature special paint schemes that are detailed by hand. The Challenger Elite gets a white and red paint scheme, with a black band that separates the top white section from the red bottom. Furthermore, it has elements like shimmering glass particles in the paint, exclusive badges and numbered consoles for all motorcycles. On the other hand, the Pursuit Elite has a dual-tone black and green paint scheme complemented by hand-painted golden elements. It also gets exclusive badging, a numbered console mark and a PowerPlus 112 engine cover. Both models are powered by a 1,834cc liquid-cooled V-twin engine making 126bhp and 181.4Nm and mated to a 6-speed gearbox. Both motorcycles are loaded with features like a 7-inch touchscreen with Apple CarPlay for navigation, keyless ignition, adaptive LED headlights, cruise control and an electronically adjustable windshield.

Ducati periodic maintenance contract is now in India

DUCATI HAS introduced its first periodic maintenance contract in India, named 'Ducati Protect,' and aims to provide comprehensive maintenance coverage to customers at a reasonable price. The contract can be had in two options: Ducati Protect Plus and Ducati Protect Pro, offering a coverage of two years or 15,000km and tenure to four years or 30,000km respectively. The Protect Plus pack is priced at Rs 25,999, and the Protect Pro is priced at Rs 68,999.

Odysse introduces Evoqis Lite electric motorcycle

ODYSSE ELECTRIC has launched its newest electric motorcycle, the Evoqis Lite in India. Powered by a rear-hub mounted motor, the Evoqis Lite is capable of hitting a top speed of 75kmph and offers a claimed range of 90km from its lithium-ion battery. It offers features like keyless ignition, multiple driving modes, a motor cut-off switch, an anti-theft lock, a smart battery system and is available in five colour options: Cobalt Blue, Fire Red, Lime Green, Magna White, and Black. The ex-showroom price of the motorcycle is Rs 1.18 lakh

Royal Enfield Bullet 650 trademarked in India

ROYAL ENFIELD has trademarked the Bullet 650 Twin name in India after multiple test mules of the motorcycle were spotted on Indian roads. The much-anticipated model is expected to sport a classic design with round LED headlamps, teardrop fuel tank, classic Bullet turn indicators and chrome detailing all through the body. Powering the motorcycle will be the 648cc, parallel-twin engine that was most recently used in the Classic 650.

Karna Kadur dominates 48th South India Rally

THE INDU CHANDHOK MEMORIAL 48th South India Rally took place at the Madras International Circuit from April 25 to 27, where multiple championships were run concurrently, including round 2 of the FIA APRC and the season opener of the Blueband FMSCI Indian National Rally Championship 2025, along with a new INRC 3T class for turbocharged cars that saw the debut of vehicles like the Hyundai i20 N Line and the Maruti Suzuki Fronx. The rally consisted of 135km of high speed flat gravel stages. Defending National Champion Karna Kadur, with co-driver Musa Sherif, clocked the fastest time in his Volkswagen Polo in the APRC. Kadur's teammate Amittrajit Ghosh, with co-driver Ashwin Naik, finished in second place while Harkirshan Wadia completed the podium. Kadur and Ghosh also finished first and second, respectively, in the INRC Overall class, while Fabid Ahmer with co-driver Milen George taking third place. That is not all, these two drivers also took home a 1-2 finish in the INRC1 class, while Suhem Kabeer with co-driver Vinay Padmashali was third. On the other hand, Harkrishan Wadia with co-driver Kunal Kashyap of Arka Motorsports clocked the fastest time in the Junior APRC category, trailed by Arnav Pratap Singh, with co-driver Rohit N in second place, while Abhin Rai with co-driver Moideen Jasheer finished third.

NDHOK MEMORIAL SOUTH INDIA RALLY 2025
Round of FIA APRC ASIA RALLY CUP
POWERED by Vamcy Merla
MRF TYRES

(Above) Karna Kadur and Musa Sherif celebrate their overall win at the FIA APRC class of the South India rally. (Left) Tarushi Vikram and co-driver Vybhav Mukund Rao with the Women INRC class trophy

Inaugural Autocross won by Vaibhav Marathe

VAIBHAV MARATHE took home the victory for JK Tyres at the Chikmagalur Gravel Fest 2025, Round 1 of the FMSCI Indian National Autocross Championship (INAC) 2025 held at Chikmangalur, Karnataka. The Goa racer won in a close fight with teammate Syed Salman to set the fastest time of 02min 57.876sec in the INAC 1 Unrestricted Class ousting Salman's time of 02min 59.687sec, while Aeman Ahmad finished third crossing the line in 03min 01.786sec. However, the results of INAC 1 2,000cc class were a stark contrast as Salman finished at the top, ahead of Chetan Shivram and Aeman in second and third place respectively while Marathe could only manage to finish fourth. The Gravel Fest in Chikmagalur serves as the first out of the seven qualifying rounds for the INAC Cup circuit.

09
10
MRF TYRES

Hero MotoSports signs Tobias Ebster

TOBIAS EBSTER is all set to be the newest rider for the Hero MotoSport team, joining the reigning world rally raid champion Ross Branch and Jose 'Nacho' Cornejo. Ebster will debut at the South Africa rally, scheduled from May 18 to 24, replacing Sebastian Buhler, who parted ways with the Indian team after a four-year partnership. The Austrian rider had an impressive run at his Dakar debut in 2024, where he won the Original by Motul category without assistance and finished 20th overall, earning him the 'Best Rookie' title. He stepped up to the Rally 2 class in 2025, where he was allowed outside assistance and finished P9. Ebster has a strong background in motocross and enduro, and the guidance of his uncle, two-time Motocross World Champion Heinz Kinigadner. Making a debut in rally four years ago, the rider got his breakthrough in 2022, a year in which he won the FIM Bajas World Cup in Dubai, continuing his run by winning in the Rally 2 category of the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge. Ebster said that he is thrilled and deeply honoured to join Hero MotoSports and also claimed to have followed the team's incredible rise over the past few years.

Hero MotoSports

New Old Money

Kia's flagship EV packs presence, tech, and real three-row space. The EV9 proves Kia's premium ambitions are no joke — until you realize what it costs

PICTURES Harvinder Singh

The Kia EV9 didn't just show up. It's walked into the global EV scene like it owns the place. It won the 2024 World Car of the Year and World Electric Vehicle of the Year, and it didn't do that by yelling the loudest or shoving the most screens into your face. It did that by being composed, confident, and critically — complete. It's not trying to reinvent the electric wheel, it's just trying to make a damn good car around it. And largely, it does.

This is Kia's global flagship EV, and it wears that weight well. Think of it as the S-Class of the Hyundai-Kia e-GMP platform lineup — a three-row, full-size electric SUV that wants to be everything from a family car

> THE KIA EV9 DIDN'T JUST SHOW UP. IT'S WALKED INTO THE GLOBAL EV SCENE LIKE IT OWNS THE PLACE

AP102TC-4686198

> YOU'RE IMMEDIATELY HIT BY THE SCALE AND SPACIOUSNESS, BUT IT'S NOT JUST THAT — IT'S THE TEXTURE AND INTENT

1. The 12.3-in instrument display in true Kia fashion gets crisp and stylish graphics. There's also a 12-in HUD which beams all relevant information right into the driver's field of view. 2. The infotainment screen is a 12.3-inch unit as well, the two screens are seperated by the climate-control screen making for a triple-screen display

to a future-proof tech capsule. And while some bits are still a work in progress, especially from an Indian market perspective, there's no denying that the EV9 sets a high bar.

Visually, it's large but not shouty. The face carries Kia's "Digital Tiger Nose" design and the dynamic LED lighting elements in the grille are straight out of a sci-fi concept sketch. It's functional futurism — those pixel-like 'ice cube' LEDs tucked into the front look distinctive, not desperate.

Move to the side and something clever happens — the C-pillar taper. Despite its sheer bulk (this is a car nearly 5 metres long with a 3.1-metre wheelbase), the profile gracefully slims down toward the rear, giving it this old-money elegance — the kind of proportioning that says, "Yes, I'm huge, but I don't need to flex." If cars had personalities, the EV9 would be that low-key rich guy with actual yachts, not Instagram flexes. Big EV energy, if you will.

The rear is clean, vertical, and sharp. No fake vents, no clutter. Just well-defined surfaces, tail lights that are upright and integrated, and a spoiler that actually seems to be doing something — it's functional, not decorative fluff, and helps the EV9 achieve a surprisingly slippery coefficient of drag of 0.28. Not bad for something built like a tech-savvy freight elevator.

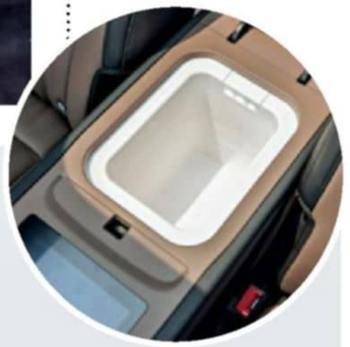
Open the door and the EV9 takes a serious shot at premium territory. You're immediately hit by the scale and spaciousness, but it's not just about space — it's the texture and intent. Soft-touch panels, recycled materials (that don't feel like they were recycled), and a highly horizontal layout dominate the dashboard.

You get a triple-screen setup — a 12.3-inch digital cluster, a central 12.3-inch infotainment display, and a 5-inch HVAC screen in between. The UI is clean, modern, and thankfully doesn't feel like a PowerPoint deck from 2032. Dual wireless chargers, USB-C ports for every row, mood lighting, multi-zone climate control, heated and ventilated seats — the feature list is flagship-grade. There's even an optional 14-speaker Meridian sound system if you're the type who plays lossless audio just to tell people you do.

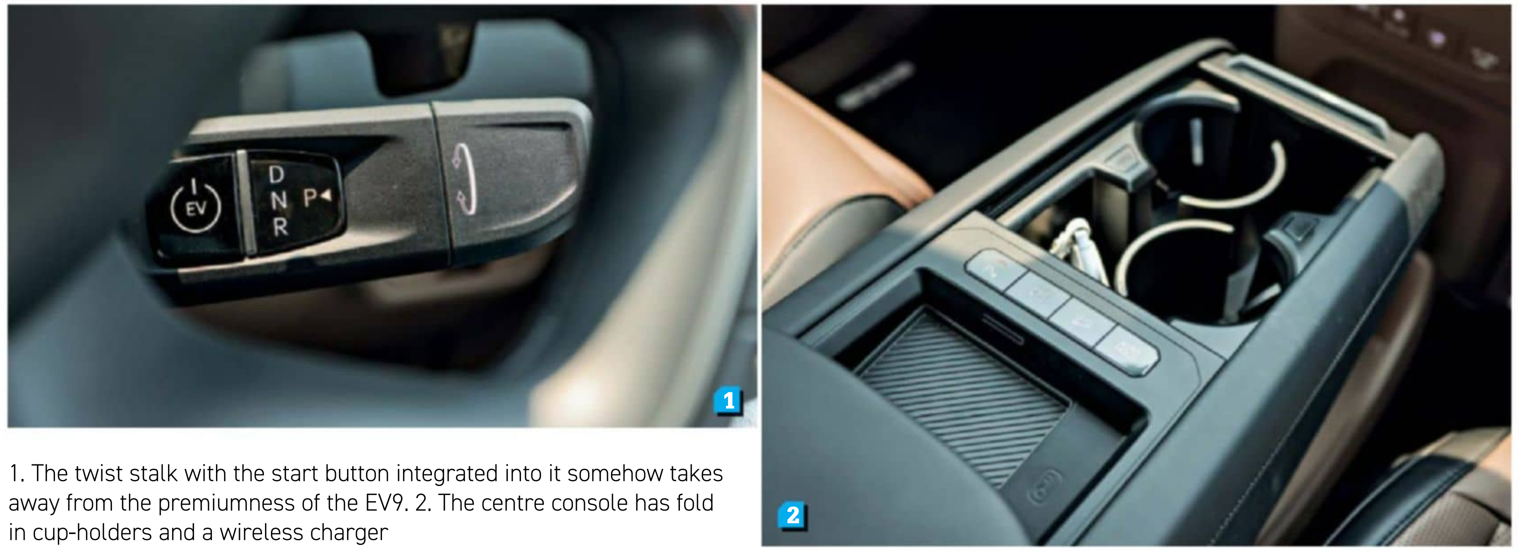
But what hits home is the space in all three rows. Row two gets the VIP treatment with captain chairs. The third row is surprisingly usable. Not just for kids or your emotional baggage — actual adults can fit back there. Headroom and legroom are adequate, and access isn't a game of yoga. The underfloor drawer storage and clever cubby placement are thoughtful touches. Kia didn't just throw in space — they engineered it.

And yes, the Digital IRVM — the smart rear-view mirror that switches to a camera feed — is more than a gimmick. Especially useful when your overzealous

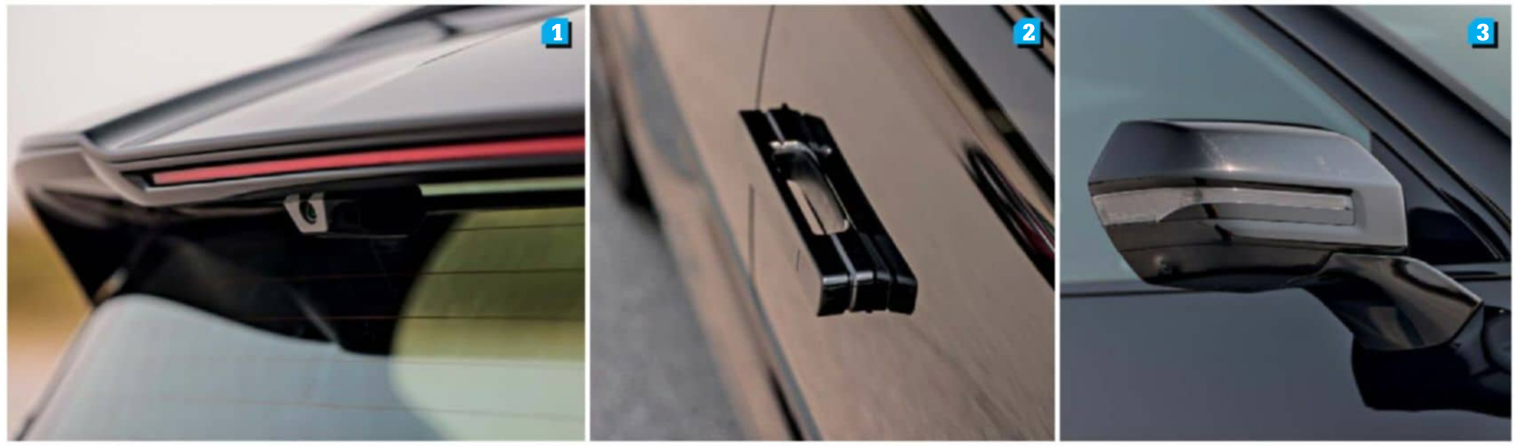
1. The driver's seat comes with 10-way power adjust, 4-way lumbar adjust, 2-way leg extention and ERGO Motion. 2. Heated, cooled and massage seats for the front row on Kia's global flagship. 3. Second-row gets 8-way Power Lounge seats with Relaxation mode and leg extention and a refridgerator (below)



> INDIA-SPEC CAR GETS THE DUAL MOTOR AWD GT-LINE, MAKING A SOLID 380BHP AND 700NM OF TORQUE



1. The twist stalk with the start button integrated into it somehow takes away from the premiumness of the EV9. 2. The centre console has fold in cup-holders and a wireless charger



1. There's a camera integrated into the wing to make it easier to reverse even when you've loaded the bay. 2. Flush fit door handles are clean and pinch-proof. 3. The mirrors are designed to offer the least drag allowing it to keep it's low coefficient of drag

Kia EV9 GT-Line AWD

Motor
2 PMSM, AWD
Power
385bhp
Torque
700Nm

Wheelbase(mm)
3,100
LxWxH(mm)
5,015x1,980x1,780

Battery
99.8kWh
Range
505km (WLTP)
AC Charging time (11kW)
8.5 hours
DC Charging time (350kW)
24min

Top Speed
200kmph
0-100kmph
5.3s

Price: Rs 1.30 crore (ex-showroom)
On Sale Now

Likes

Interiors, features, safety systems, performance, range

Dislike

Ground clearance

aunt insists on carrying her entire winter wardrobe, stacked above visibility height. A+ for road trip practicality. The EV9 is available in two main powertrain configurations globally, and the India-spec car gets the dual motor AWD GT-Line, making a solid 380 bhp and 700Nm of torque. That's enough to get this 2.7-tonne leviathan from 0–100kmph in about 5.3 seconds. Not exactly Plaid territory, but smooth and fast enough to make you re-check the speedo.

Kia claims a range of up to 541km (WLTP), but in the real world — factoring in highway runs, a bit of AC, a few impatient overtakes and some heavy city traffic — you're realistically looking at 430–450km. Which, frankly, is more than enough for weekly urban duties and most intercity weekenders.

The 800V architecture means ultra-fast charging — 10 to 80 per cent in just under 25 minutes with a DC fast charger. But let's be honest — good luck finding a 350kW in India unless you're in Mumbai, Bangalore, or Delhi and extremely lucky. But mostly, you're looking at an hour at 100kW charger for a full recharge which is more than adequate even for longer drives.

1. V2L and electrically flat folding seats are part of the E-GMP platform's best features. 2. As the third-row can fold flat, there is 1,232 litres of space for carrying luggage

We didn't get to push the suspension too far during our short test, and that's worth noting. This is a large SUV, and despite the EV-specific platform and low centre of gravity, it's still big. We didn't get to explore how it handles tight turns, rough patches, or high-speed cruising over varied Indian surfaces – so consider the ride and handling verdict to be on pause until a longer drive. But for the most part, it did seem to be pretty good at diminishing the heft of this massive SUV.

ADAS is on board with Highway Driving Assist 2, lane centring, forward collision avoidance, rear cross-traffic alert, blind spot cameras, and more. Kia's digital key lets you use your phone to lock/unlock the car, and OTA updates mean the software keeps improving – in theory at least.

Now here's the kicker. The Kia EV9 GT-Line AWD is priced at Rs 1.30 crore, ex-showroom. For comparison, the Mercedes-Benz EQS 450 4MATIC SUV costs Rs 1.28 crore, and the full-fat EQS 580 4MATIC sits at Rs 1.42 crore. So the EV9 is priced just above the entry-level EQS and not too far off from the top-end one.

It's a bold place to stand, especially for a brand without the century-old badge clout of Stuttgart. Yes, the order books are already filled for 2025, and demand is clearly strong, but it's tough to make a rational case for the EV9. But it does have a vibe – futuristic but not alien, luxurious without excess, powerful but not absurd. The EV9 isn't trying to be a status symbol. It's trying to be a statement of intent – from Kia to the market, to the consumer.

Like other E-GMP based EVs, the EV9 too gets a charging-level indicator beside the charging port, and an electrically-operated charging flap

> BUT FOR THE MOST PART, IT DID SEEM TO BE PRETTY GOOD AT DIMINISHING THE HEFT OF THIS MASSIVE SUV

EV9
AP102TC-4686198

COMPETITION CHECK

BMW iX xDrive40

BATTERY 76.6kWh **POWER** 322bhp **TORQUE** 520Nm **PRICE** ₹1.21crore

Mercedes-Benz EQS 450 SUV

BATTERY 122kWh **POWER** 265bhp **TORQUE** 650Nm **PRICE** ₹ 1.28 crore

VERDICT

The Kia EV9 is a proper flagship, with no asterisks. It nails the fundamentals: design, space, tech, power, and presence. It proves that Kia can play with the big boys – and occasionally, outclass them. But in a market like India, where badge value and pricing optics still rule, the EV9 is a tricky sell. It might be the best electric SUV you'll never see enough of. Unless you're behind the wheel – in which case, lucky you.

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SilveR Lining

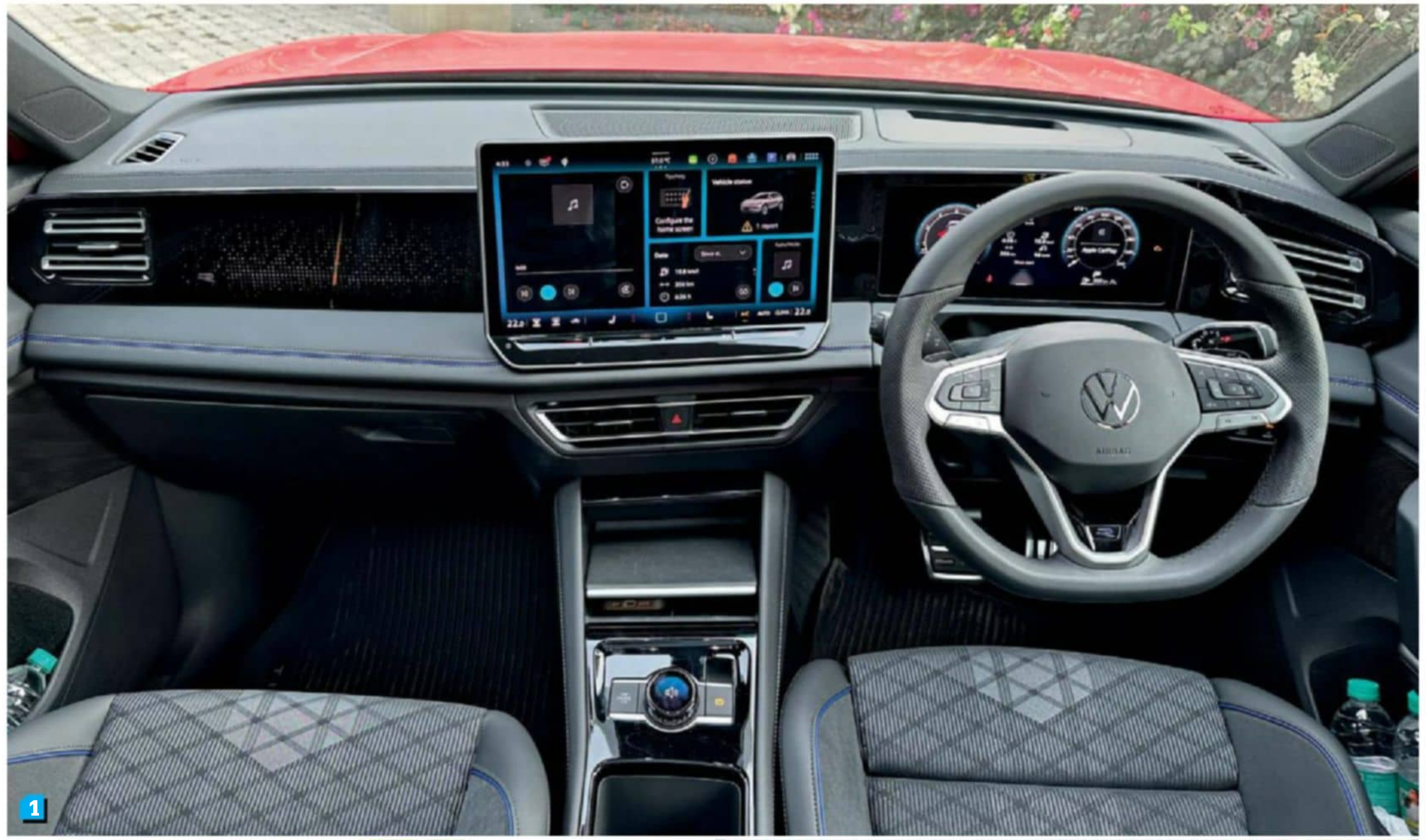
Volkswagen has launched its flagship SUV at Rs 49 lakh (ex-showroom). Can the brand new Tiguan R-Line deliver on the promise of a performance-oriented SUV? We went on the prowl for answers

The Tiguan R-Line is Volkswagen's flagship model in the country. Why is that important? This also happens to be an extremely popular product in global markets. Could that mean it can make it here as well? Before we get to answering these questions, it's important to know that the Tiguan has been around in India since 2017, we got the Allspace in 2020 and then the newer model in 2021. This brings us to the third-generation Tiguan R-Line and that 'R' is quite important, because that means this is a more performance-oriented SUV for our market. Can it deliver on being the sportiest SUV of them all? We recently had a go with the Tiguan R-Line and these are our first impressions.

First, let's dive into the exterior details that set it apart from the standard Tiguan. A sportier-looking setup for the front bumper, with a black glossy honeycomb design, stands out. Then there's that illuminated moulding between the headlamps and the signature 'R' badge, which is left-aligned.

MH14MF1396

PICTURES Harvinder Singh



1. VW's done well with the overall layout of the dashboard. 2. Massive 15-inch touchscreen infotainment system takes centre stage. 3. The digital instrument panel isn't exactly to my taste, I prefer the analogue feel. 4. Handy rotary knob is a welcome addition, and is customisable, too. 5. Plenty of charging options is a boon

Around the sides, there are more of those signature R badges on each of the front doors, but the real stand-out feature here is those 19-inch 'Coventry' wheels, which suit the overall performance-oriented mood. Apart from that, there are the silver-anodised roof rails as well as the side skirts and the LED rear combination lamps, which come with a special signal pattern or animation. The Tiguan R-Line comes with a total of six colour options, and this one is called the Persimmon Red Metallic. When it comes to the second row, there's a neat storage space in the door pockets, and there's also a hook and a couple of LED lights for illumination, along with two rear AC vents. One can control the temperature via the switches just under it, and there are two USB-C charging points present. That's not all, there are two USB-C chargers in the front as well. Then there's the fairly spacious armrest, which stretches out to reveal a couple of cup holders. The recline on the seat is also not too bad, although the under-thigh support isn't that great.

Shift to the front seats and this is the Tiguan R-Line's ace-in-the-hole. It is the most important aspect, given its sporty credentials, with it being the first R-Line to come here. The feel of the cabin is like a typical Volkswagen; it feels robust, it feels solid, and it feels like a comfortable and premium place to be in. There are a few plasticky bits like this casing that runs across the dashboard, and there's also housing for the ambient light with 30 colours to choose from, which is great. I am not a fan of the plastic, but it does give the dashboard a unique look on the whole. One thing that sticks out immediately is the 15-inch touchscreen infotainment system, which is massive, like most of the EVs that you see today. It is quite nice and vivid in terms of colour and graphics. It's got all the features that you need, but one annoying bit here is that the AC controls are in the touchscreen infotainment system. There are capacitive buttons for the volume and the temperature control, but again, this does feel like a bit of a miss; there should have been physical buttons for the HVAC controls.

Since the cabin has a darker shade, the sense of space isn't that great, but there's a huge panoramic sunroof to counter that well. It's a similar story on the outside as well; this isn't a particularly large SUV, and it feels more compact. As a result, one ends up feeling a lot more cocooned on the inside. One major reason for that is extremely well-bolstered seats that look incredibly sporty,

> AS FAR AS DRIVING DYNAMICS ARE CONCERNED, THIS IS ONE OF THE BEST-HANDLING SUVS ON THE MARKET

Likes

Performance, handling, design

Dislike

Price

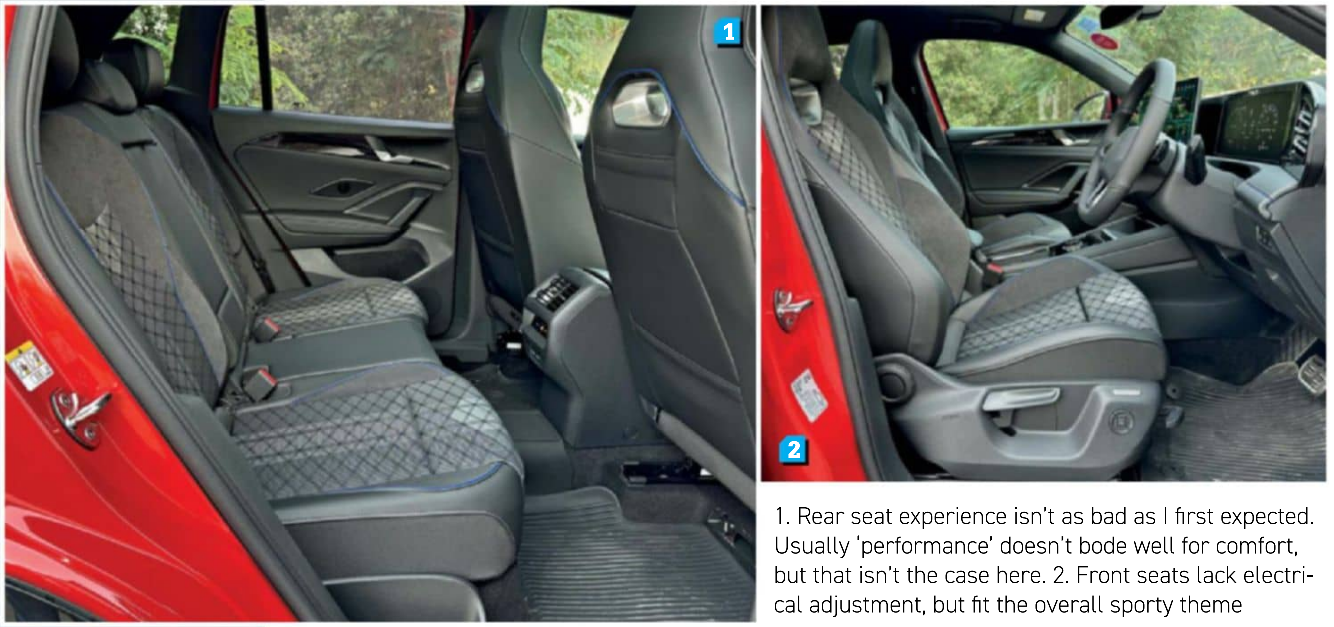
> THAT'S THANKS TO THE ADAPTIVE CHASSIS CONTROL (DCC PRO), WHICH DOES ALTER THE DAMPING, STEERING STIFFNESS

and come with velour finish, which is a classy touch. Getting into the cabin feels like an occasion. However, there is a downside to the seats. For one, there are no cooled seats or electronic controls either. That feels like a genuine oversight to me, but on the plus side, there are massage functions for the front passengers. Another element I came to appreciate is those signature 'R' badges on the steering wheel, dashboard and seats. There's also distinctive blue stitching that feels special.

In terms of storage space, VW has done well; there is ample storage in the door pockets, and you get space to charge two phones wirelessly. The unique thing is that there slab or a pad that comes down right above them, allowing one to keep yet another phone there or some other knick-knack. You also get two cup holders just below the armrest, and the armrest is adjustable for height, and it stays put on the designated height, which is something that I've loved about VW cars. Another thing that I would have appreciated would have been a slightly sportier-looking steering wheel. Yes, it's got that R badge, but something on the lines of the Hyundai N Line models would have been a nice touch. In terms of ride quality, one can feel the underlying stiffness in this car almost immediately. One can expect to feel a little less comfortable than one would in the standard Tiguan, but that is to be expected because this is the R-Line. It isn't jarring or a deal breaker, but yes, it can be felt. The plus side here is that this SUV takes corners into its stride and then some. There weren't a lot of corners in our convoy drive as part of the Volkswagen Experiences, but whenever one showed up, and the Tiguan R-Line passed that test with flying colours.

As far as performance is concerned, power is derived from a 2.0-litre, four-cylinder petrol engine that churns out around 204bhp and 320Nm of torque, and comes mated to a seven-speed DSG gearbox. There are several driving modes to choose from, and these do make a huge amount of difference in terms of the Tiguan R-Line's handling and ride quality dynamics. That's thanks to the adaptive chassis control (DCC Pro), which does alter the damping, steering stiffness and more on the move. Another plus is here is the fact that there's a rotary nob right where the gear selector would sit, and it is a handy tool to shift between driving modes and adjust the volume button otherwise. There are also 'Off-Road' and 'Snow' terrain modes, thanks to VW's 4MOTION electronic four-wheel drive system.

The power delivery from that aforementioned motor is smooth; it comes in with a nice heft just above 2,000rpm and revs up to the redline without ever feeling stressed. This feels like a tractable engine wherein one can shift between driving sedately and like a hooligan quite easily, and I appreciated that dual nature of this car. Could it have handled a more powerful powertrain? Most certainly, but don't forget that it is the R-Line, and not the full-fledged R. The seven-speed DSG complements the engine well, and one can shift up and down quickly, thanks to the paddle shifters. However, one thing I did find odd is the gear selector itself, which sits behind the



1. Rear seat experience isn't as bad as I first expected. Usually 'performance' doesn't bode well for comfort, but that isn't the case here. 2. Front seats lack electrical adjustment, but fit the overall sporty theme

COMPETITION CHECK

Skoda Kodiaq L&K
ENGINE 2.0-litre **POWER** 201bhp
TORQUE 320Nm **PRICE** ₹ 48.69 lakh

Nissan X-Trail
ENGINE 1.5-litre **POWER** 163bhp
TORQUE 300Nm **PRICE** ₹ 49.92 lakh

1. Rear AC vents along with temperature control and two USB-C charging points are definite plus for rear occupants. 2. The rear armest has flush cup holders that can be pulled out, a neat addition. 3. Boot space storage officially sits at 652 litres and is expandable up to 1,650 litres. 4. VW Group's 2.0-litre TSi does duties on a number of products. 5. There are several 'R' badges all around, and looks distinct. 6. 19-inch wheels with dual-tone finish look modern

1

2

> IT DELIVERS ON THE PROMISE OF A PERFORMANCE-ORIENTED SUV WITH AN EXCLAMATION POINT

3

4

5

6

steering wheel, like an indicator stock. Honestly, I've never been a fan, and I appreciate an old-school gear selector. Another oddity here is the fact that it isn't a flick up and down to change gears, but rather a twist front and back, which takes some getting used to at first.

Moreover, the 10.25-inch digital instrument console is rich in terms of texture, and is easy to read but felt slightly small for my taste, especially in contrast to the huge 15-inch screen smackdab in the middle. I would've much rather appreciated those analogue dials from the older Passat or Jetta. In fact, some variants of the Virtus and Taigun still get those lovely dials. In terms of fuel efficiency, the Tiguan R-Line indicated a figure between 10-11kmpl, in a mixed driving cycle. However, we will get to testing the fuel efficiency once we have the car for a full-on road test. As far as driving dynamics are concerned, this is one of the best-handling SUVs on the market, without a shadow of a doubt. It delivers on the promise of a performance-oriented SUV with an exclamation point.

In terms of safety, the Tiguan R-Line comes with all four disc brakes, nine airbags as standard and L2 of ADAS, with 21 specific features catering just to it. It is also a five-star rated car in terms of the Euro NCAP safety rating test, which is how it should be with a VW. This feels built a tank, make no mistake about it. A couple of things I wish were different are a slightly better exhaust note and better performance from the brakes. The bite seems to come in a little late, and that can be slightly worrying at first. As for the former, there's no arguing with twin pipes or a nice chrome-tipped muffler, is there?

Volkswagen Tiguan R-Line

Engine
1,984cc, 4-cyl, turbo-petrol
Power
204bhp@ 4,500-6,000rpm
Max torque
320Nm@1,500-4,400rpm
Gearbox
7-speed DSG with 4MOTION

Wheelbase (mm)
2,680
LxWxH (mm)
4,539x1,859x1656

0-100kmph
7.1 seconds
Top speed
229kmph

Price: Rs 49 lakh (ex-showroom)
On sale Now

VERDICT

Most VW fans will remember that iconic thud from the doors closing. It was first demonstrated by the brand with the Polo, as it had just arrived on our shores. It meant reassurance, superior German build quality and the fact that you could have a car that handles exceptionally. Lest we forget, Polo reached its cult status with the GT version, can the same happen with the Tiguan with the R-Line model? It seems likely, but for most, the price tag of Rs 49 lakh (ex-showroom) will feel like a stretch. For that money, one gets a well-sorted, European-spec CBU SUV that handles like a charm. What's more, I do hope enthusiasts end up buying this car because that could potentially mean an R-Line for the Virtus, which sounds like a scrumptious proposition.

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Game of thrones

The latest generation of the Toyota Vellfire was launched in the country almost two years ago, but can it still hold to its promise of being a people carrier for the wealthy?

PICTURES Harvinder Singh

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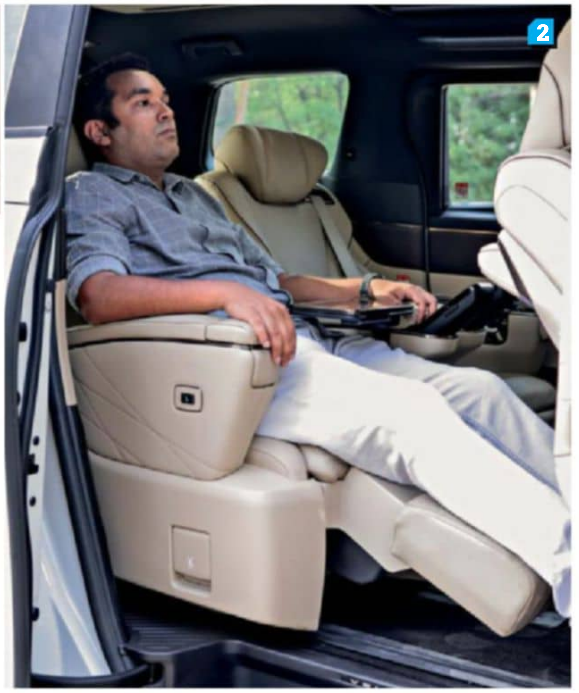
MGF TOYOTA

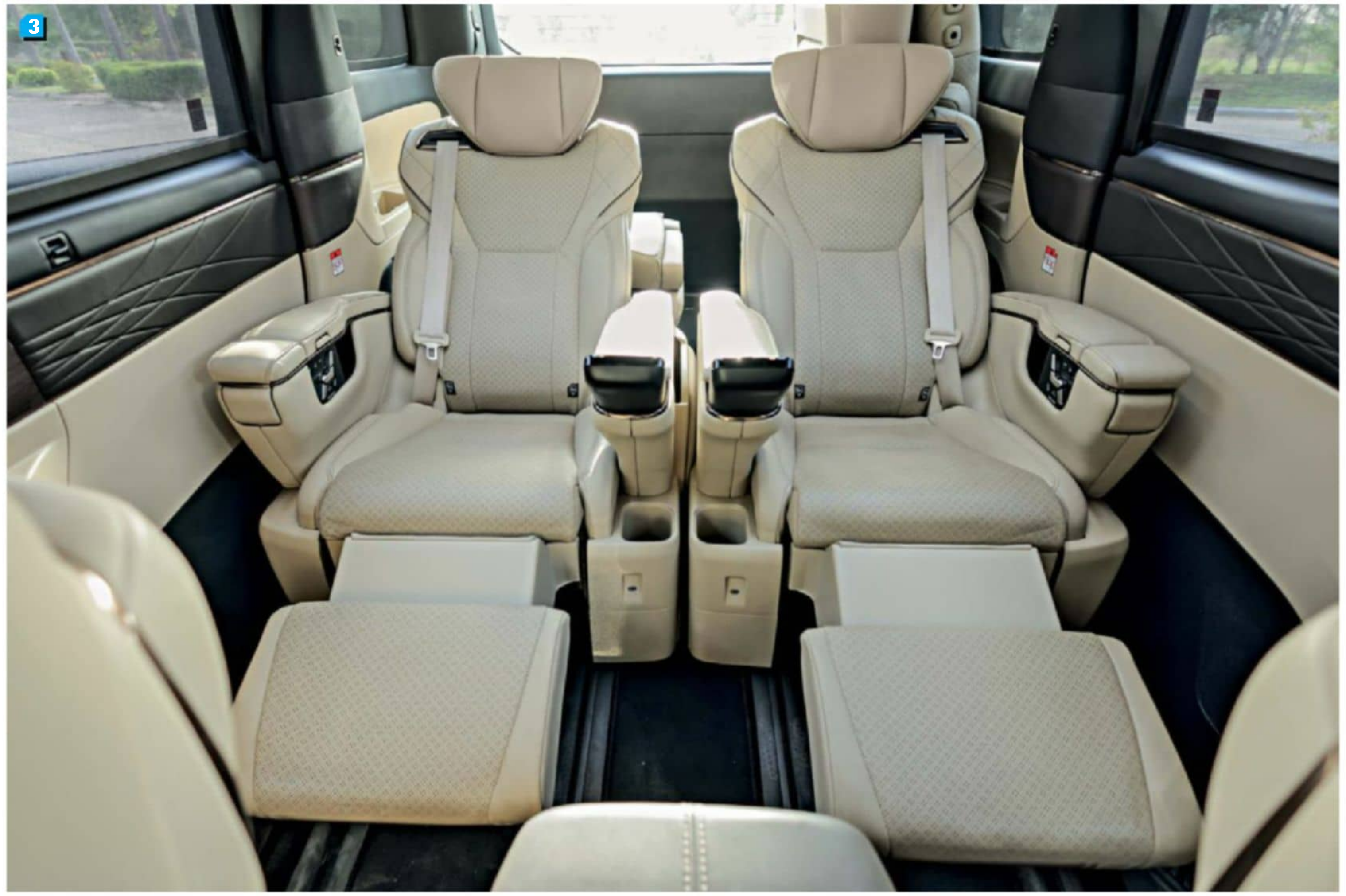


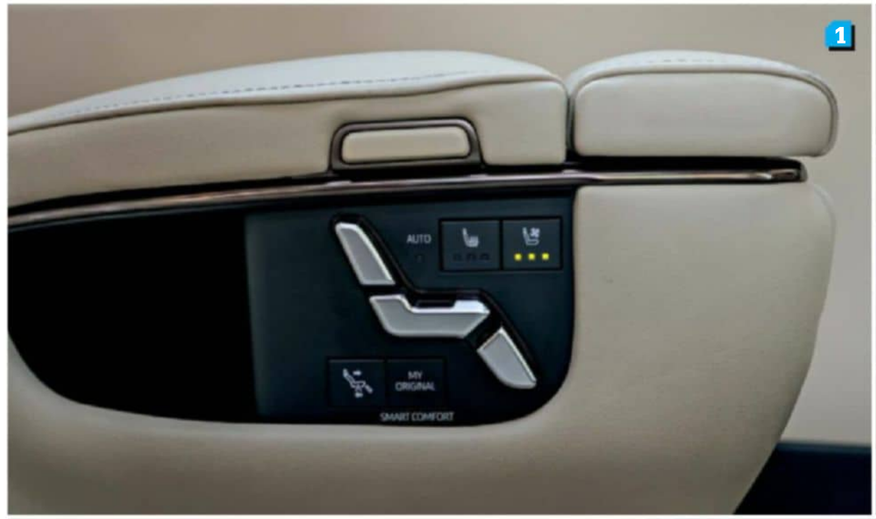
1. There's a tiny button to control the positioning of the seat from the outside, which comes in handy when getting into the third row. 2. The second row of seats feels like a business-class experience. 3. Ottoman seats, plenty of storage spaces, but the beige colour isn't to my taste. It can start to age fairly early on, and smudges are visible as well

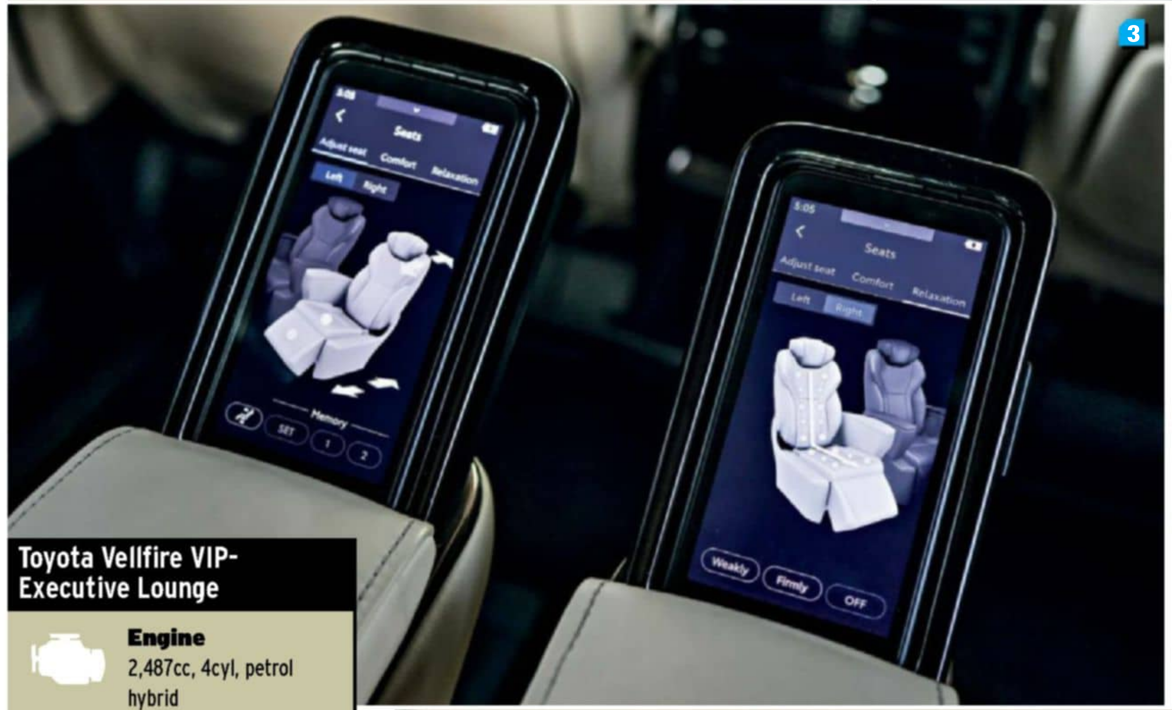
The Vellfire has always held a special place in my heart, not only because I am a fan of Toyota cars in general, but because it was one of the first few cars I had the privilege to review early in my career, back when it first arrived in the country. I distinctly remember driving the previous generation Vellfire at Toyota's test track in their Bidadi plant, and taking loop after loop at their figure-of-eight-shaped course. My younger mind, obsessed with speed and power, couldn't clearly comprehend this opulent MPV's purpose. After several rounds, in the driving seat and then shifting to the second row, it hit me like a strong gust of cold wind on a warm summer day. Toyota's idea with the Vellfire is to provide a people carrier for the wealthy. In fact, not just the wealthy, but for those who already have at least a couple of cars in the garage. It's for those who want to go from point A to B in ultimate luxury and believe it or not, practically. Toyota has a very good handle on how to make a good MPV or people carrier, just take the Qualis and Innova as examples, and all becomes crystal clear. In that respect, the Vellfire should be an extension of that experience. Before diving headfirst into those comfortable second-row seats, which is undoubtedly the business end of things for a car of this type, let's talk about all that's changed from the previous generation.

The first thing you'll notice is that massive front grille, which is reminiscent of the Toyota Land Cruiser. The 'three lens' headlamp and DRL setup is also more snug than before there are also those large design elements just above the fog lamps. Around the sides, the new Vellfire gets 19-inch alloy wheels, as opposed to the 17-inch alloy wheels on the previous generation with the silver finish. There's also a Z-shaped element on the B-pillar, which looks particularly distinctive. At the rear, the overall design is a little simpler than before, and elements like the Toyota logo with a blue tint are now replaced with the regular one. The housing for the tail lamps also gets coloured treatment

> TOYOTA HAS A VERY GOOD HANDLE ON HOW TO MAKE A GOOD MPV OR PEOPLE CARRIER I.E. QUALIS AND INNOVA







1. Seat controls sit on the inside half and can feel cumbersome to adjust while seated, especially for generously sized individuals. There are also buttons to control ventilation and memory seats as well one that lets you stretch the Ottoman seats to its maximum. 2. Front-row also gets electronically adjustable seats, and offers good support. 3. Detachable smartphone-like screens are a neat addition, and feel light and easy to operate. 4. HVAC controls on the overhead console are substantially sized, and legibility isn't an issue

4
AUTO
OFF
22.0
22.0

Toyota Vellfire VIP-Executive Lounge

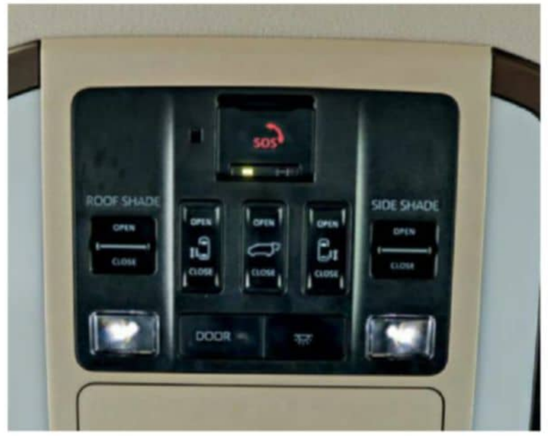
Engine
2,487cc, 4cyl, petrol hybrid
Power
193bhp@6,000rpm
Torque
240Nm@4,296-4,500rpm
Gearbox
eCVT

LxWxH
5,005x1,850x1,950mm
Wheelbase
3,000mm
Fuel efficiency
19.28kmpl (claimed)
Fuel tank capacity
60 litres

Price Rs 1.33 crore (ex-showroom)
On sale Now

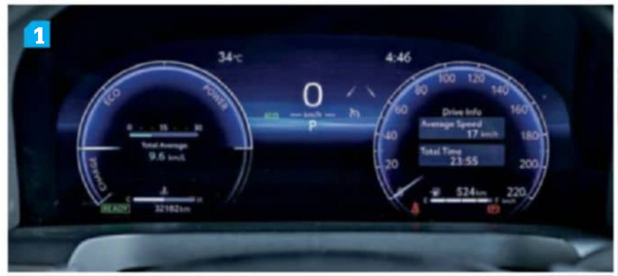
instead of the clear ones on the older model, and the reflectors are mounted vertically rather than horizontally. The design of the rear lights themselves has been reworked to look simpler and more approachable. On the whole, the design language feels a lot more cohesive and not as busy as the older model. However, it retains its imposing stance, thanks to its large dimensions, especially in terms of height. The Vellfire we got for our test was finished in the 'Platinum Pearl White' paint job, and there are two others to choose from, called 'Black' and 'Precious Metal'. Honestly, the black looks like a more impressive colour, more menacing too.

Usually, this would be the point to get in the front seat and speak about the driving experience, but that's for later. First, let's tackle the second row of seats. Apart from the screens for each of the passengers in the second row and larger AC vents, space at the rear has been increased by 5mm for the second row and 10mm for the third row. There's also a new colour for the trim called 'Sunset Brown', and it continues to have 'Natural Beige' and 'Black' options. Then there's the 'Super-Long Overhead Console', which is Toyota jargon for the large console fitted to the roof, and a 14-inch screen which folds open on starting up, both new to the Vellfire. There are individual moonroof shades on each side, which can be operated independently and add to the Vellfire's business-class appeal. The aforementioned console also houses the controls for each of the electrically operated doors, air conditioning and sun shades. There are also plenty of cubby holes and grab handles for storage as well as ingress and egress. The ventilation, positioning and memory functions can be controlled via the physical switches on the insides of the seats, and can be an issue for slightly larger

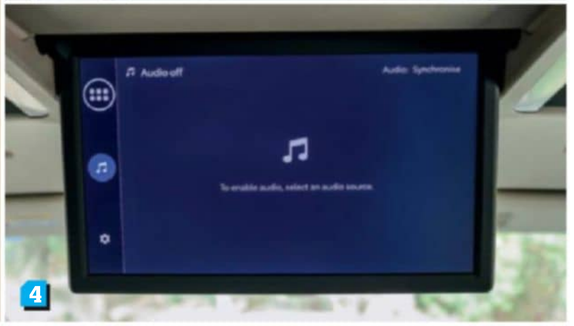


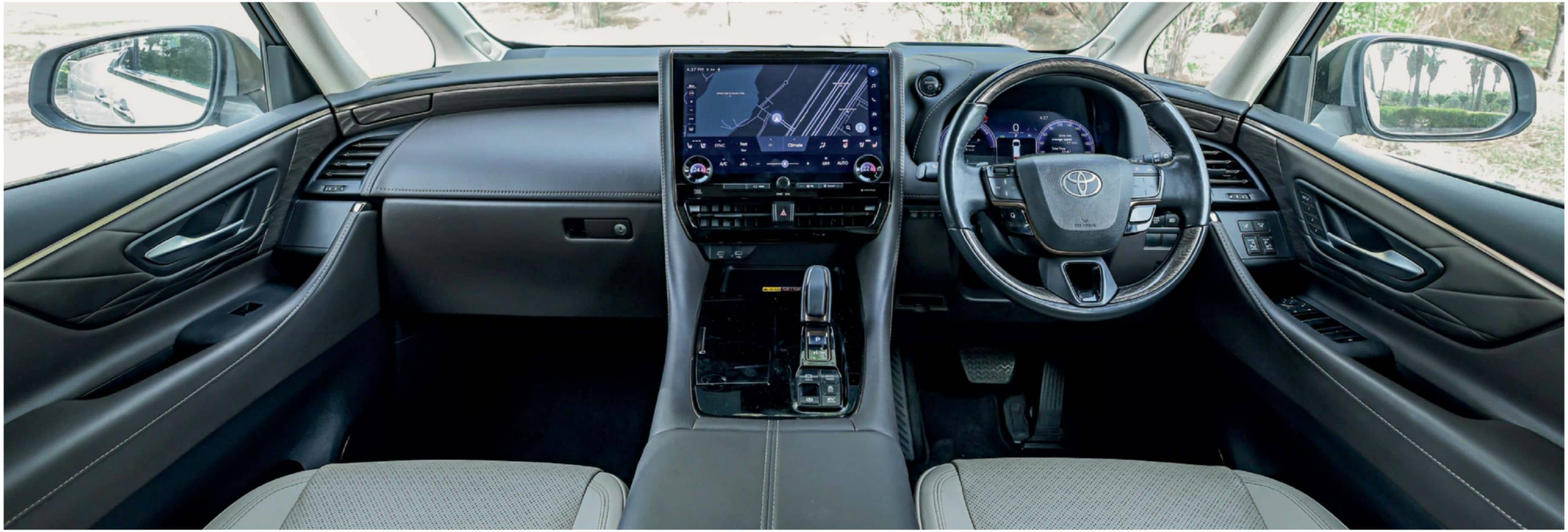
Overhead controls accessible to the front seat passengers have usable functions, like buttons to operate the boot release, rear doors, as well as the roof and side shades

1. The digital driver's display is new to the Vellfire, and has a similar layout to the Camry, which is also petrol-hybrid. Instead of a tachometer, there's a different approach based on efficiency. Different drive modes bring about different layouts. 2. Most usable part of the overhead console for the second row passenger is the controls. Feels sturdy but not exactly premium. 3. There's a new 14-inch touchscreen infotainment system, which feels modern and up-to-date. 4. Yet another 14-inch screen for rear passengers gets an HDMI port



2
SIDE SHADE
ROOF SHADE





1. There isn't a huge amount of space in the boot, especially with all three rows down. However, one can free up some space with the third row folded up. 2. Toyota's also added new 19-inch alloy wheels with a machine finish to the Vellfire's repertoire. 3. The distinctive Z-shaped design element on the B-pillar is also new, and gives the overall outline some pep

Likes

Space, efficiency, design

Dislikes

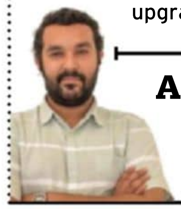
Price, performance

individuals. The aforementioned pull-down side sun blinds were the first to ever be produced by Toyota, when this car was first launched in 2023. The two smartphone-like screens, which can be detached from their place and used to control the massage functions, ventilation and positioning as well, just to name a few. That's not all, there are folding tables, which fold out from the armrest and sit in front of the passenger, and are good for keeping things, but a laptop won't really fit on it comfortably. On the plus side, it further opens up to show a vanity mirror and a grippy surface to avoid slippage on the move. The third row of seats are also fairly impressive, and it won't be an issue given the ergonomics and space on offer. However, with all three rows up, there's not too much in the way of boot space. But, fold the third row, and it opens up a decent amount of space. To sum up, this is an experience that will leave a lasting impression. One of comfort, space and accessible luxury. It's not dripping in gold, but it's as close as it gets.

I am well aware that the vast majority of Vellfire owners will, in all likelihood, not be driving it, but it's important to speak about the experience irrespective. In terms of changes, there's a new steering wheel and a wrap-around design element to the dashboard as a whole, which looks quite opulent, almost Lexus-like in some ways. There's also a bigger 14-inch touchscreen infotainment system and a fully digital driver's display, along with 15 JBL speakers. Apart from this, the centre AC vents are now stacked horizontally, and the ignition button has been moved to the left-hand side, right next to the steering wheel. There were a lot more physical buttons that have been done away with, and the gear selector is now smaller and easier to slot into place, compared to the older one with steps to it. From a seating position perspective, this feels less van-like compared to the previous generation. If I had one of these, and I had to pop into the front to drive it every now and then, I wouldn't mind in the slightest. The steering controls feel light and easy to manage, and the Vellfire has a pretty impressive turning circle as well. Although the steering itself is quite large, it's not difficult to handle, but I did find the controls mounted on it puzzling. Once again, from a look and feel perspective, this feels good, but I wouldn't call it great. It's functional with a hint of luxury. The Vellfire continues to be powered by a 2.5-litre, four-cylinder, petrol hybrid powertrain, which churns out 193bhp and 240Nm of peak torque. There's also a 182bhp electric motor, which takes the total power output to 250bhp. It's underpinned by the TNGA-K platform, which the company claims offers enhanced rigidity by 50 per cent over the third-generation models. Honestly, it did feel slightly more comfortable than the older Vellfire, but there is still room for improvement. On sharper undulations, the Vellfire's size can be felt in the second row. One has to learn to be extremely slow on speed breakers and a bad patch of road. However, if one is on a highway, and the going is smooth, this people carrier makes going fairly straightforward and polished. The engine itself does its job, but that's about it. It's not exciting or vigorous in any way, and is more of a tool than a weapon. Just like other hybrids, it switches between electric and petrol power, depending on the driving conditions. If one is in the mood to push, the engine and tyre noise can be heard clearly in the front, which feels pointless. It's best to just take it down a notch, concentrate on the job at hand, and deliver the rear passengers in easement.

VERDICT

It's hard to fault a car that doesn't really have rivals in the truest sense. Sure, there is the Lexus LM, but that costs almost double, and there is the Kia Carnival, which costs almost half as much as the Vellfire. In my book, the Vellfire is for the discerning customer who understands the value proposition of a Toyota and wants a vehicle that provides a hassle-free owning experience. It doesn't quite have the brand value of a Lexus or German luxury brands, but it is meant to do its job to the utmost with maximum comfort. In its latest avatar, it feels like an improved product, and although I would've preferred a sub 1 crore price tag, those who've owned a Vellfire will, with all certainty, go out and buy the latest one in the market. Those with an Innova looking to upgrade, this is the answer.



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CORPORATE CLEARANCE

Who says you can't have your cake and eat it too? Enter the all-new Skoda Kodiaq, a unique mix of comfort, luxury, safety and 4x4 performance

The daily commute is an essential part of our lives. The journey from home to the workplace is often a time for solitude and contemplation. Naturally, our vehicle assumes the role of our second home, and hence, it is essential that said vehicle ticks all the right boxes. Especially when the route to the office can be filled with hurdles like traffic, an important board meeting, and a ticking clock. Thankfully, we had the Skoda Kodiaq at hand to bring the situation under control. It's comfortable, luxurious and most importantly for any family man, safe and sound for everyone at home. Even before one sets off, it's easy to get mesmerised by the 'Simply Clever' touches like the unique parking ticket holder on the front windshield, or the tablet and phone holder for the rear passengers, along with the additional phone holder above it. There are also handy door-panel wastebins, luggage hooks in the boot for any extra baggage, along with a neat flexible element to stow away anything that might move around during the commute. Since time was of the essence, it was time to unleash all 201bhp and 320Nm of peak torque from the Kodiaq's 2.0-litre TSI motor, a powerhouse of an engine. Therefore, being slightly behind schedule wasn't a worry. Another facet greatly assisting the press towards the office was the smooth and seamless shifts, courtesy of the seven-speed DSG. Speaking of effortless progression, the massage seat functions ensure that the drive is spent in relaxation. This, combined with the acoustic insulation, ensures outside noise is kept to a minimum. The AGR-certified

The Kodiaq's feature list extends beyond just the obvious. There's three-zone climate control along with heated and cooled seats. The massage seat function for the front passengers ensures peace of mind at all times

Skoda's 'Simply Clever' features make for some truly usable elements like the umbrella holder in the driver's door, talk about Euro luxe!

ergonomics, a seal of approval only awarded to products that have been assessed as particularly back-friendly, only adds to the overall experience and keeps the anxiety of reaching on time to a bare minimum. Further soothing the mood was the superior Canton sound system with a 13-speaker setup. However, the biggest obstacle to a timely arrival lay ahead. A traffic jam of epic proportions. Nevertheless, taking the road less travelled proved to be a treat with the Kodiaq. The alternative route was riddled with the unexpected. Thanks to the Kodiaq's advanced and dynamic MQB platform and terrain modes, which include 'Off-road' and 'Snow', handling such rough terrain turns into a matter of conquering the unexplored. The Kodiaq's 4x4 capabilities were on full display regardless of varying kinds of terrain. Skoda's flagship SUV maintained its calm and did not, even for a second, take away from the rich cabin experience in any way. As mentioned earlier, safety is without compromise on any Skoda product, and the Kodiaq is no different. It is equipped with nine airbags as standard, and its clever and intelligent safety-based electronics all work together to guarantee a sense of security. After the hustle and bustle, the office finally hove into view. A calm and collected yet brisk walk to the meeting room revealed several empty seats. Mission accomplished, with time to spare, and one can't help but adore a smile of admiration for the Kodiaq. Skoda's latest is the final word for discerning buyers with a penchant for executive-class travel with a strong dose of adventure.

Skoda's all-new seven-seat SUV comes loaded to the gills with convenience features. There's wireless Android Auto and Apple CarPlay, which allow for integration with Google Maps and Apple Maps, as well. The 12.9-inch touchscreen infotainment system is at the centre of it all, providing vivid and holistic graphics and readability. The two wireless 15W chargers only add to the Kodiaq's plentiful additions, and the space right above it can be used to store everyday knick-knacks. The quality of the materials also feels superior, thanks to the 'Cognac' leather trim

There will always be obstacles on the way to work, like the usual traffic jam, which almost always means a late arrival. It was time to get creative and think outside the box or rather the white markers

Working class electric

The 2025 version of Tata's entry-level electric vehicle is here, and we got behind the wheel to experience the changes first hand

PICTURES Harvinder Singh

Tata Tiago.ev XZ+ Tech Lux LR

Motor
Single PMSM
Power
75bhp
Torque
114Nm
Gearbox
Single-speed, FWD

Wheelbase(mm)
2,400
LxWxH(mm)
3,769x 1,677x1,536

Battery
24kWh, Li-ion
Range
293km (claimed)

Top Speed
140kmph
0-60kmph
5.7 seconds

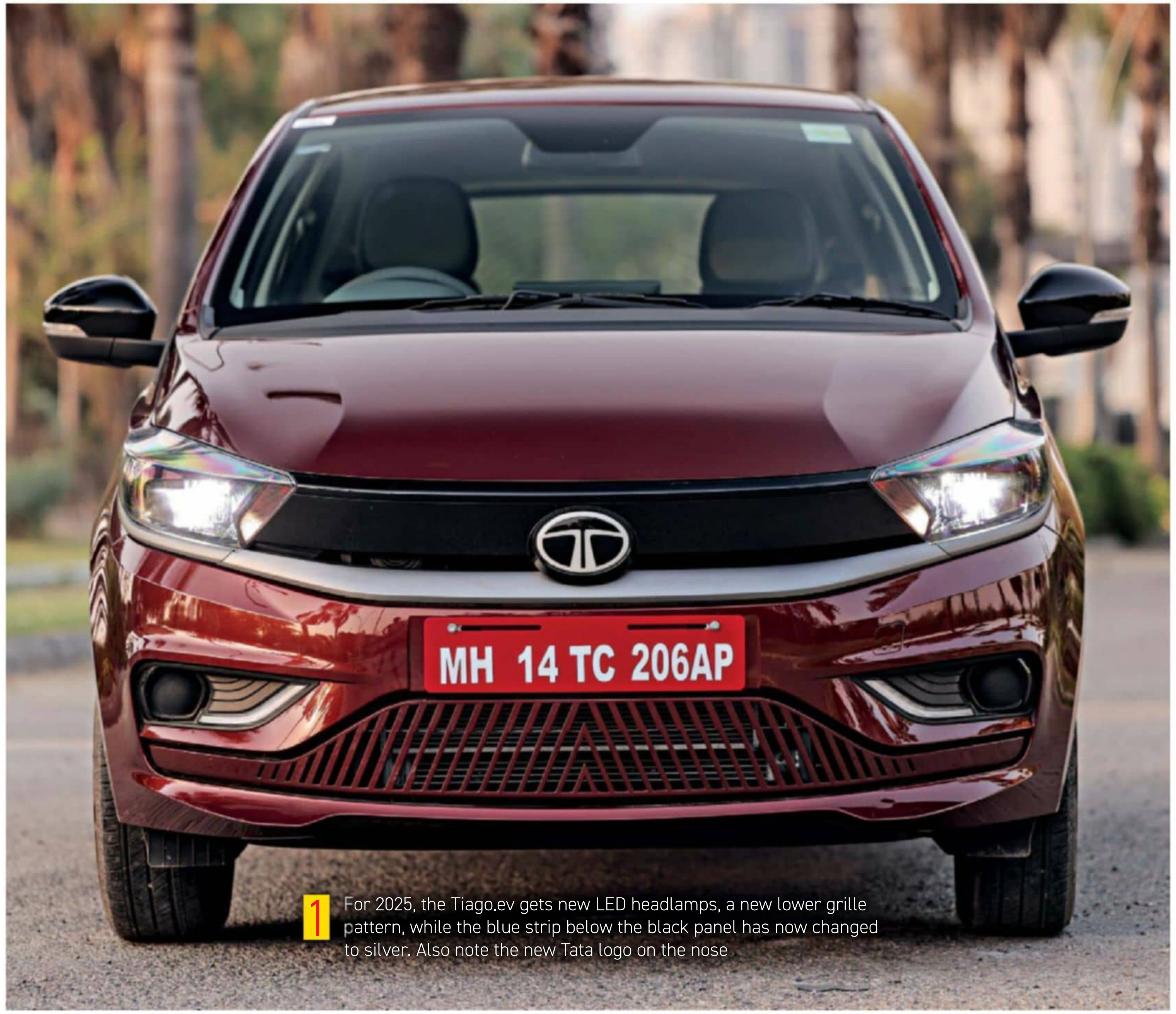
Price: Rs 11.14 lakh
(ex-showroom)
On sale Now

Tata.ev is India's largest EV maker, and the boom that started with the Nexon.ev has now ballooned into a large portfolio including the Curvv.ev and Punch.ev, but the smallest and most affordable of these is the Tiago.ev.

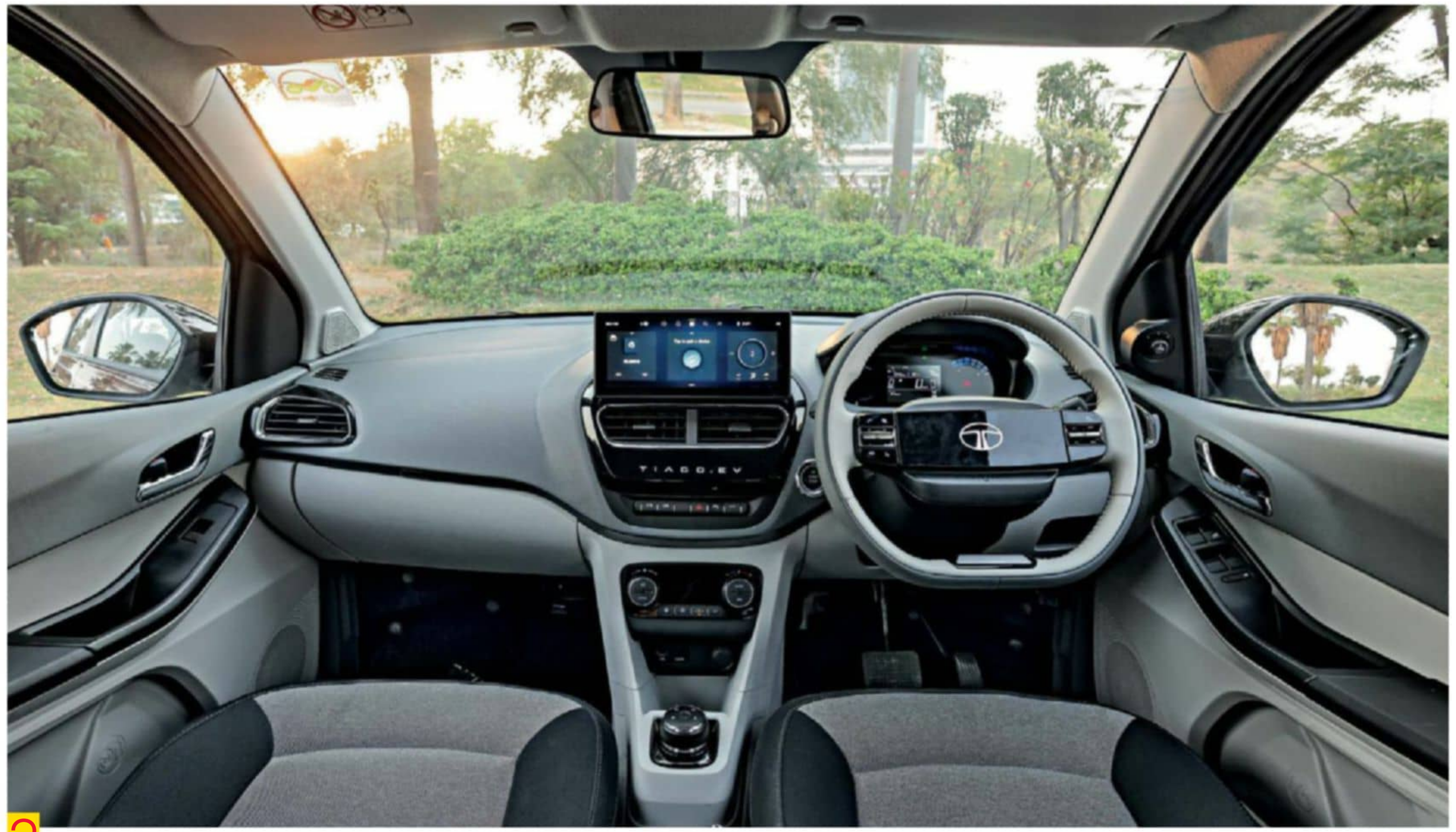
A problem which almost all EVs in the current day and age face is the price difference when compared to their ICE alternatives, and while this has more or less been addressed with vehicles costing upwards of Rs 40 lakh, in the mass market segment, this is a cause for many compromises.

Firstly, the battery tech, while advanced, is not affordable enough to be installed in a sub-Rs 10 lakh car, because if it is, the car will cost much more. Then there is the problem of space. In bigger vehicles, there is volume to work with, engineers can easily manage battery sizes and play around with the placement of motors, all while providing a maximised cabin experience, and this is further aided by dedicated, scalable EV platforms, all of which is yet again, costly. Of course Tata has brought the change with the introduction of the Acti.ev dedicated EV platform, that debuted with the Punch.ev, the Tiago still continues with the older platform, but it has been improved for 2025.

First off are the visual changes. This includes the new LED headlamps, which replaces the older halogen units, that has also allowed Tata to add a smoked effect. Below this, the entire lower bumper section is new with the older grille now replaced by a new pattern, which looks modern and quite fitting for the electric powered hatch. The signature blue strip, that earlier signified the electric powertrain, now sports a new silver shade. New boomerang shaped LED DRLs have also been added, along with a new fog lamp housing, which strangely did not house any fog lamp on our review unit, despite being the top-spec model on sale, odd. Over to the sides, the changes are


1 For 2025, the Tiago.ev gets new LED headlamps, a new lower grille pattern, while the blue strip below the black panel has now changed to silver. Also note the new Tata logo on the nose

> GAPPING MOST CARS IN CITY TRAFFIC AND WEAVING THROUGH IS VERY EASY, WITH ACCELERATION AVAILABLE ALL THE WAY


2 New grey and black colours adds some premiumness to the cabin, that extends to the seats and the door panels as well

limited to the fresh covers for the 14-inch wheels, and the placement of the '.ev' badge, that has moved from the fender to the door. Over at the rear, the Tiago looks the same, but it gets a rear-view camera jutting out of the tailgate and a new shark fin antenna. At the nose and the rear, the hatch carries a more youthful-looking Tata logo, while the badging at the rear is blacked out. Alongside this, Tata has introduced new colour options for the Tiago.ev, including Supernova Copper and Chill Lime, with our test car being in the former shade.

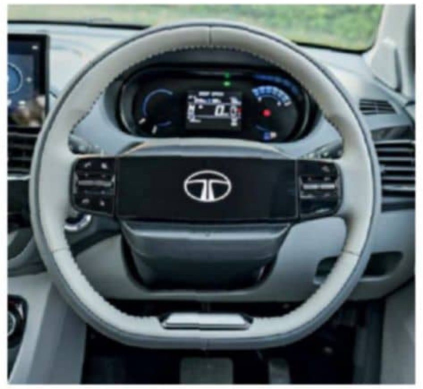
Inside, the changes are more major compared to the older car. And here is where Tata's focus on tech and features of their prime models has reaped benefits for the brand's entry-level model, with the tech now trickling down. Adorning the centre is a new 10.25-inch infotainment display, as we have seen on the Punch.ev. This unit is crisp, and works smoothly, but I did face issues while connecting to my phone, and even switching off the car, and locking it didn't change the status, I had to ultimately use the steering mounted buttons to reset the entire system.

Apart from this, the instrumentation also has a new look, with a large MID and two digital dials, one for the power output and one for the SOC level and regen braking level. Looks neater, but the MID is still beaming too much information in a single space, and the overall visibility of the dials isn't great, if it's peak sunlight and one is wearing polarised glasses. The cabin has gone through a rejig as well, the beige has made way for grey, giving it a nice cool black and grey theme that extends to the seats as well. The aircon vents in the centre have been reprofiled as well, while for the driver, the newest addition has to be the new steering lifted from the Punch.ev. It is techy, looks nice, and feels good to hold. Tata has expanded on their safety ethos, by adding TPMS, hill-hold, ESP and reversing camera, that is surprisingly good quality for a hatch.

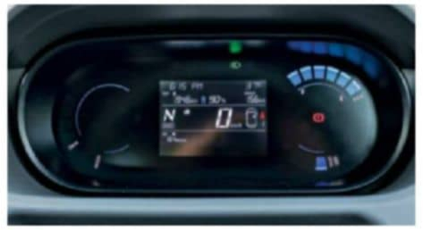
As before, the Tiago.ev is offered with a 19.2kWh battery pack and a larger 24kWh battery pack, and with the same spec motor. But optimisations on the BMS means that the claimed range for the larger-battery specced Tiago has gone to 293km. The 75bhp and 114Nm front-mounted e-motor is actually pretty exciting for a car of this size, and the 5.7 seconds claimed sprint from 0 to 100kmph can actually be felt. Gapping most cars in city traffic and weaving through is very easy, with acceleration available all the way to almost 90kmph, post which it starts to wane, and that points to not so great highway cruising at triple digit speeds.

Now between my spirited driving, (Yes, that is how much fun the Tiago.ev is), and aircon on max (yay! summers are here), the Tiago was returning about 190-200km on a single charge, but every now and then when I did drive it efficiently, the DTE barely dropped, so one should be able to maximise it to a real world range of about 230km.

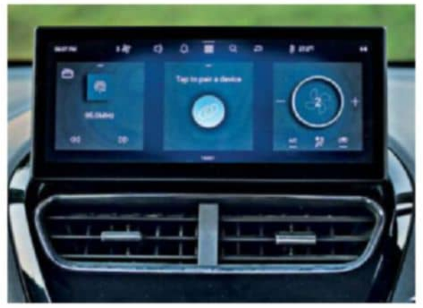
WHAT'S NEW



3 New steering is premium, and with its illuminated logo and buttons, makes for a good experience



4 Redesigned IP is fresh, but the MID is a bit too cluttered. Visibility in harsh sunlight is low



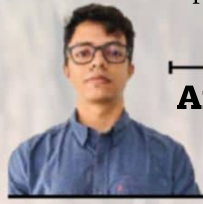
5 New 10.25-inch infotainment is crisp and hi-res, and works smoothly for the most part

6 The 45W USB-C charging port is a nice addition

The electric version of the Tiago is by the far, the most fun and dynamic version of Tata's hatch that one can have. The floor mounted battery and the pretty sorted weight distribution means that one can take corners pretty confidently, and while the steering isn't the most direct, it has enough feedback that one can have proper fun on curves. A bit of throttle control needs to be exercised when exiting corners, as the 114Nm going through the 14-inch low-res tyres does mean a fair bit of screeching at times. And despite the fun part, I had to be over cautious regarding the brakes, which while adequate for city driving, did lack the progressiveness and tended to go from very little bite to full stopping power.

The aforementioned floor-mounted battery pack also ensures incredible ride quality, and I have always stood by Tata's ride standards, but the EV has a definite edge over the ICE version. It goes over bad patches like one of its larger siblings, with only deeper potholes making it stutter. No complaints with regards to the comfort, but I would have liked a slightly more ergonomic seating and steering position, as it can get awkward and tiring for longer drives.

This 2025 iteration of the Tiago.ev is not a new car, but the improvements make it feel real fresh and modern, but where I feel the Tiago wins out against its only rival, the MG Comet is in providing a complete hatchback experience, with space for four or five occupants, great ride comfort and performance that most people won't utilise to the fullest, and that makes it a great deal, until Tata shifts the Tiago to a born electric platform for a maximised EV experience.



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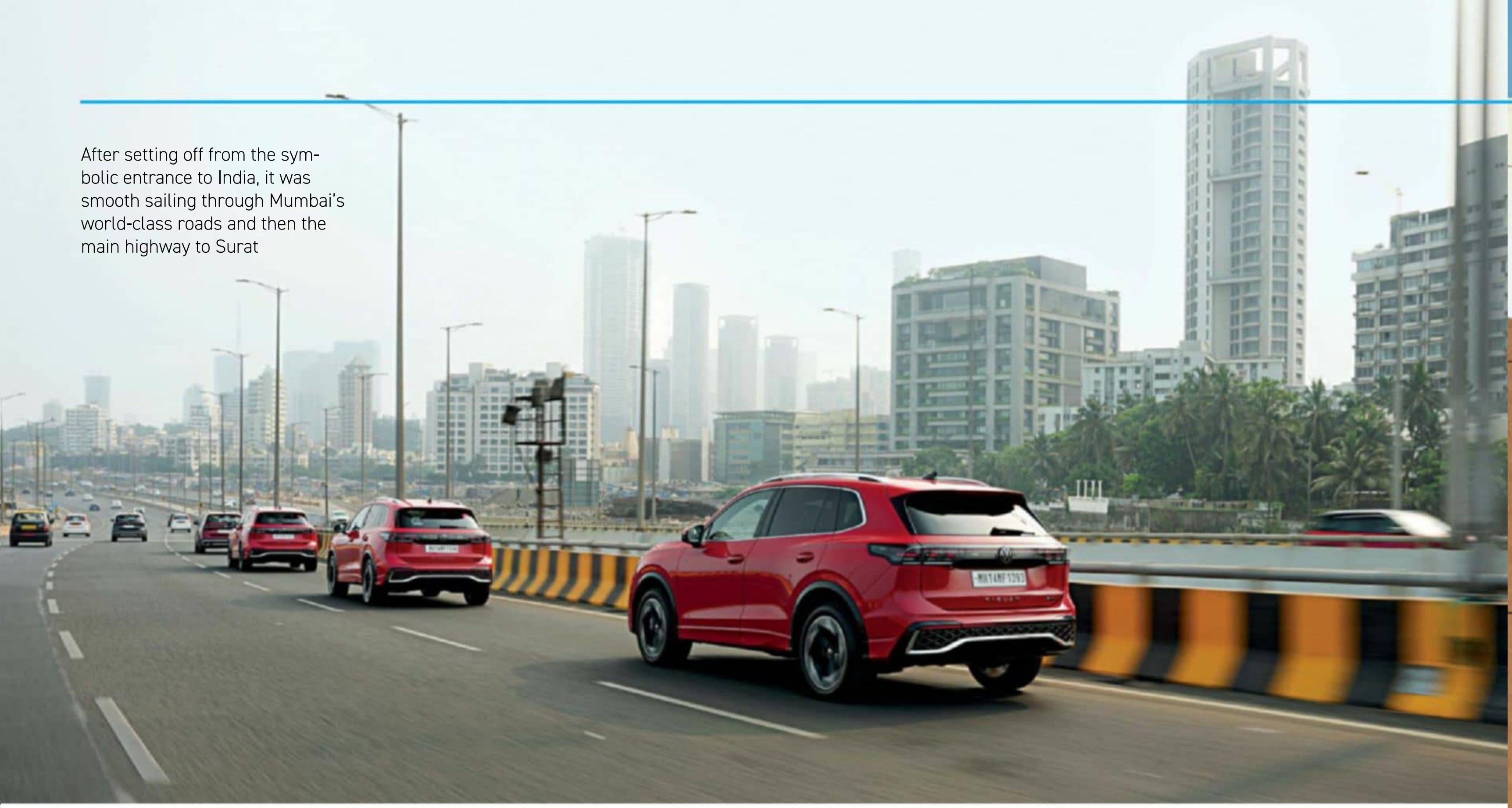
SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

The third edition of Volkswagen Experiences saw the Tiguan R-Line travel from Mumbai to New Delhi, covering iconic locations along the way. We were part of the first leg, which featured the Gateway of India and Surat Diamond Bourse

The Gateway of India, an iconic landmark that stands tall as an entrance into our beautiful country. It's beyond Iconic. In yet another edition of Volkswagen Experiences, we took the Tiguan R-Line, the crown jewel of the VW lineup in the country, across some of India's most iconic landmarks. The atmosphere was filled with excitement, as it usually is with an impending journey of epic proportions at hand. As the convoy readied for the start, it was time for the official flag-off and head out from one of Mumbai's most iconic landmarks. Since there was a lot of exploring to be done, we got comfortable with the first R-Line in India. Our main stop of the day was to be the Diamond City of Surat. We headed out of Mumbai and almost crossed the financial capital to get on the highway towards Gujarat, we made a quick stop for breakfast. Surat is situated about 300km from Mumbai, and on the way, we experienced well-paved roads that serve as the main road between the two cities. Hence, traffic was heavy, and there was a steady flow throughout. However, the Tiguan R-Line made short work of this journey. The Tiguan model line-up was first introduced back in 2017, followed by the Tiguan Allspace in 2020 and then the next-gen model in 2021. This is the third-gen Tiguan R-Line, which draws inspiration from the high-performance R models from VW's global stable . The R-Line models offer a more dynamic driving experience along with a sportier appearance than their standard counterparts.

Introduced in 2010, the R-Line is a trim package designed to enhance the sportiness and visual appeal of various Volkswagen models. It offers sportier upgrades, primarily focusing on cosmetic enhancements such as unique bumpers and wheels. That becomes instantly clear with the signature 'R' badges, which feature on the front grille and front doors, when it comes to exteriors. On the inside, it's

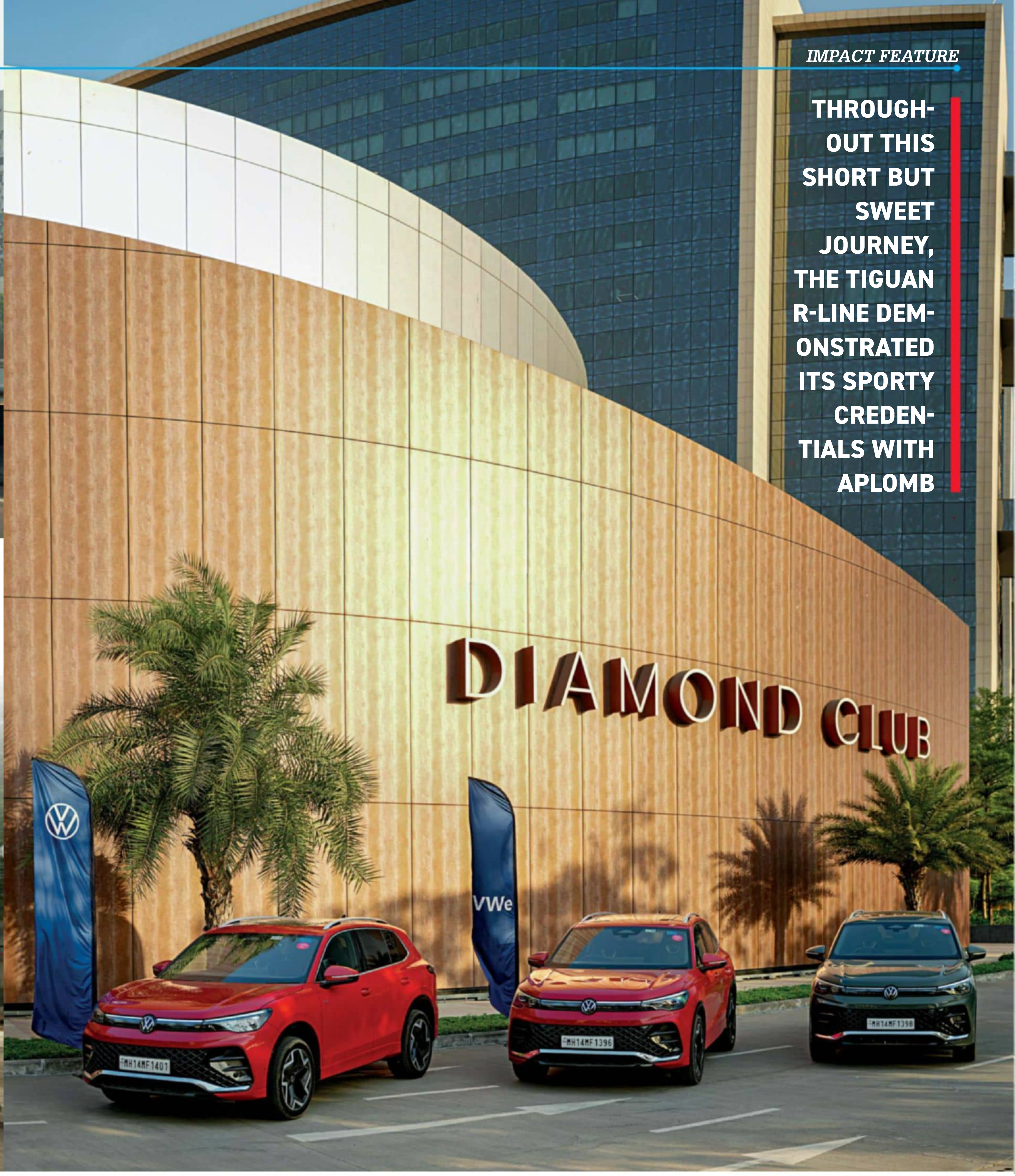


After setting off from the symbolic entrance to India, it was smooth sailing through Mumbai's world-class roads and then the main highway to Surat

present dashboard, on the seats and the steering wheel as well.

All of these specially crafted elements bring together the feeling that this SUV has been made with the driving dynamics in mind. Other special elements like the sportier front and rear bumpers, side skirts, and distinctive alloy wheels contribute to a more curated appearance. There's more to be had with the Tiguan R-Line, thanks to the sport seats, unique upholstery with distinctive stitching. There's no doubt that VW has done an excellent job of providing the driver with a performance-oriented atmosphere. This is a flagship that sets itself apart from the crowd by setting the expectation straight, right from the get-go.

Before we reached the end of the first leg, we stopped for a spot of lunch and then pushed towards the final destination. Volkswagen Experiences, in its third edition, is proving to be not just a showcase of the excellent range of vehicles the German automaker has to offer, but also its vast range of capabilities. The Tiguan R-Line isn't just a flagship for VW in India, but also a clear indication of Volkswagen's promise of an overall package that is suited for the driver in each one of us. Let's not forget that Volkswagen is also setting a national record for the fastest convoy to travel between the Gateway of India in Mumbai to India Gate in New Delhi. We will be co-holding this record with the brand, along with other publications involved in this expedition. As we turned towards the iconic location in Surat, it was time to wind up for the day. We've made our way to the city of Surat and explored Surat Diamond Bourse, which is the world's largest building dedicated to diamond trading activities. Throughout this short but sweet journey, the Tiguan R-Line demonstrated its sporty credentials with aplomb. It even holds its own, as far as design language is concerned, amongst some of the epic locations across the country. Our part of the journey came to an end in Surat, but the show went on as the VW Tiguan R-Line strutted its stuff.



THROUGHOUT THIS SHORT BUT SWEET JOURNEY, THE TIGUAN R-LINE DEMONSTRATED ITS SPORTY CREDENTIALS WITH APLOMB

Best in the world

The 2025 World Car Awards honoured the best cars from across the world, evaluated extensively by the best automotive journalists in the world. The awards ceremony held as part of the 2025 New York International Auto Show saw the stars align for winners

The panel of WCOTY jurors which also includes Yogendra Pratap, editor, Auto Today with Steven Center, EVP & chief operating officer, Kia America with the 2025 World Car of the Year award, for the Kia EV3

Steven Center, EVP & chief operating officer, Kia America alongside the 2025 World Car of the Year winner Kia EV3

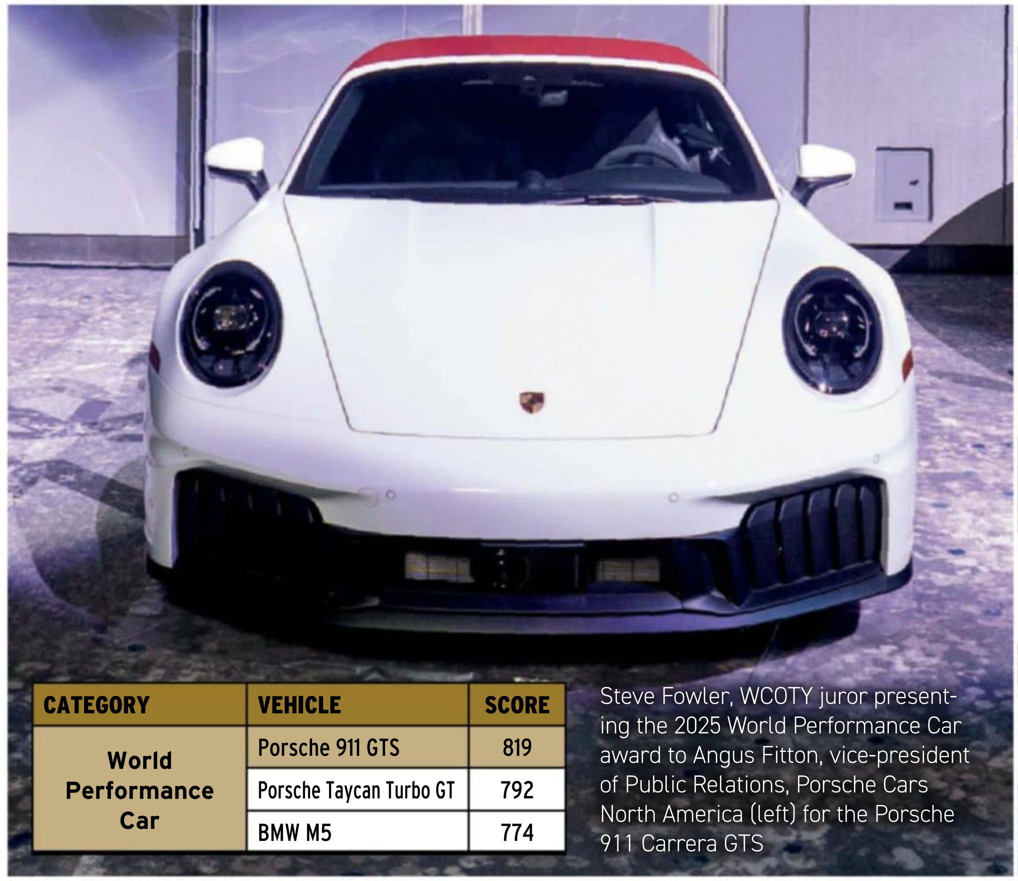
KIA EV3 has been crowned the 2025 World Car of the Year, with the Korean automaker winning the prestigious award for the second year on a trot, after bagging it for the EV9 last year. This also marks six awards for Kia in the World Car Awards' 21-year history. Commenting on EV3's win, Ho Sung Song, president and CEO, Kia said "It is an immense honour for everyone at Kia that the EV3 has been awarded the 2025 World Car of the Year title. This award highlights Kia's global leadership in providing design-led, technologically advanced, sustainable mobility solutions and how the EV3's class-leading attributes redefine the user experience for customers worldwide." The EV3 was voted the best in the category from a list of 52 contenders. These contenders were then shortlisted into three finalists, that included the third-generation BMW X3 and the Hyundai Inster.

CATEGORY	VEHICLE	SCORE
World Car of the Year	Kia EV3	780
	Hyundai Inster	764
	BMW X3	754

2025 World Car Person of the Year: Stella Li

Stella Li of BYD has been awarded the 2025 World Car Person of the Year. She has been a key figure in BYD's incredible international growth, with a host of global model debuts, and the company passing the milestone of producing its 10-millionth new energy vehicle. Three contenders were announced, with Li featuring alongside Ralph Gilles, chief design officer, Stellantis and Simon Humphries, head of Design and chief branding officer, Toyota. Commenting on winning the award, Li said, "This award is the result of the 1,10,000 R&D engineers at BYD who continue to provide us with the latest technological advances that are reflected in our electric vehicles and Super Hybrid DM-i technology. I am glad to play my part in putting these sustainable technologies in the hands of as many consumers as possible around the world."

PORSCHE 911 CARRERA GTS is 2025's World Performance Car, testament to the German sportscar's pedigree. This marks the eighth win for Porsche in the World Performance Car category, with the brand winning nine World Car Awards during its 21 year history. "Performance has been in the DNA of the 911 since it was first introduced in 1963. With each of the eight generations since then, our aim has been to set the bar higher. The 911 Carrera GTS with the innovative, lightweight T-Hybrid system is the latest advancement in that quest. We are thrilled that the World Car jury could experience the power and performance of the car first-hand and are very grateful for the recognition." said Oliver Blume, chairman of the Executive Board at Porsche AG. The 2025 World Performance Car had 17 cars competing for the win, with three finalists - BMW M5, Porsche 911 Carrera GTS and Porsche Taycan Turbo GT.



CATEGORY	VEHICLE	SCORE
World Performance Car	Porsche 911 GTS	819
	Porsche Taycan Turbo GT	792
	BMW M5	774

Steve Fowler, WCOTY juror presenting the 2025 World Performance Car award to Angus Fitton, vice-president of Public Relations, Porsche Cars North America (left) for the Porsche 911 Carrera GTS

Stella Li (R), executive vice president, BYD recieving the 2025 World Urban Car award for the BYD Seagull from WCOTY juror Carlos Sandoval

BYD SEAGULL is the 2025 World Urban Car. BYD has been a finalist at World Car Awards before, with the Dolphin reaching the top three in the 2024 World Urban Car category and the Seal reaching the top three in the 2024 World Car of the Year category. Receiving the award, Stella Li, executive vice president, BYD, commented, "We are incredibly proud and honored that the BYD Seagull has been recognized as the World Urban Car in the prestigious World Car Awards 2025. This achievement reflects our commitment to providing sustainable technologies and exceptional service to customers worldwide. At BYD, we are dedicated to accelerating green mobility and contributing to the global effort to cool the Earth by 1°C." The Seagull was chosen from twelve cars, shortlisted to three cars including the Seagull, Hyundai Inster and the Mini Cooper Electric.

CATEGORY	VEHICLE	SCORE
World Urban Car	BYD Seagull	776
	Hyundai Inster	773
	Mini Cooper Electric	756

The World Car Awards jury, which comprises of 96 distinguished international automotive journalists from 30 countries at the World Car Awards ceremony

> “IT IS AN IMMENSE HONOUR FOR EVERYONE AT KIA THAT THE EV3 HAS BEEN AWARDED THE 2025 WORLD CAR OF THE YEAR TITLE. THIS AWARD HIGHLIGHTS KIA’S GLOBAL LEADERSHIP” - HO SUNG SONG, PRESIDENT & CEO, KIA

VOLVO EX90 is the 2025 World Luxury Car. This is the third win for Volvo at World Car Awards, with the XC60 winning the 2018 World Car of the Year title. “We’re pleased to see the EX90 get the recognition it deserves. It was up against some tough competition, but this award proves that the EX90 appeals to some of the most demanding customers across the world.” said Håkan Samuelsson, chief executive officer of Volvo Cars. The Volvo EX90 was chosen from an initial entry list of ten vehicles from all over the world then a short list of three finalists, including the Volvo EX90, Porsche Macan and Porsche Panamera.

Jim Nichols, head of Product Planning, Volvo Car USA (right) recieving the 2025 World Luxury Car award for the EX90 from Scotty Reiss, WCOTY juror

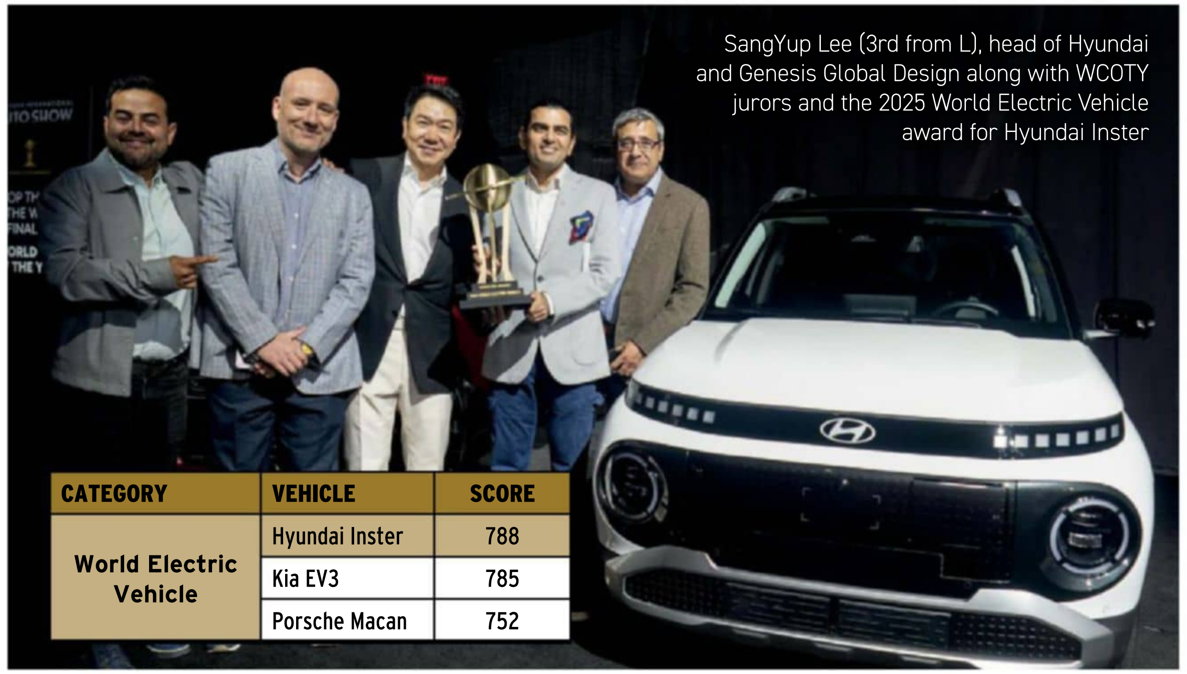
CATEGORY	VEHICLE	SCORE
World Luxury Car	Volvo EX90	759
	Porsche Macan	758
	Porsche Panamera	751

VOLKSWAGEN ID. BUZZ has been awarded the 2025 World Car Design of the Year. “We set out to create an electric vehicle that not only pays homage to the iconic Microbus but also propels us into the future of automotive design,” said Kjell Gruner, president and CEO, VW Group of America. “The ID. Buzz was always intended to be more than just transportation; it’s our brand’s electric soul, a halo that radiates fresh energy and excitement.” A design panel consisting of five global design experts was asked to first review each candidate and establish a short-list of recommendations for the jurors’ final vote. The design experts include Anja Bracht (Germany - Pforzheim University), Gert Hildebrand (Germany - owner Hildebrand-Design), Tom Matano (USA - Academy of Art University, former head of design – Mazda), Victor Nacif (USA - chief creative officer, Brojure.com and Design instructor, New School of Architecture and Design) and Shiro Nakamura (Japan - CEO, Shiro Nakamura Design Associates Inc.). The ID. Buzz won against the Kia EV3 and the Toyota Land Cruiser.

Jens Meiners, WCOTY juror, with Dr. Kjell Gruner (R), vice president and CEO, Volkswagen Group of America for the ID.Buzz

CATEGORY	VEHICLE	SCORE
World Car Design of the Year	Volkswagen ID. Buzz	328
	Toyota Land Cruiser	302
	Kia EV3	292

HYUNDAI INSTER is the 2025 World Electric Vehicle. This marks the third win for Hyundai in the category, with the Ioniq 6 winning in 2023 and the Ioniq 5 winning in 2022. Hyundai has won a total of eight awards at World Car Awards through the years. “The Hyundai Inster has been a winner with customers since we introduced it. It’s very gratifying that the experts on the prestigious World Car Awards jury feel the same way. The combination of compelling design, range, enjoyable driving characteristics, intuitive infotainment and technology that customers appreciate is emblematic of Hyundai’s approach of delivering exceptional value to our customers. The fact that our global portfolio is successful both commercially and critically speaks to the hardworking people throughout the Hyundai value chain who are delivering some of the best vehicles on the road today. Thank you to all the jurors for your service to this great industry,” said José Muñoz, president and CEO of Hyundai Motor Company. A total of 31 vehicles competed in the World Electric Vehicle category, with the three finalists including the Hyundai Inster, Kia EV3 and Porsche Macan Electric.



SangYup Lee (3rd from L), head of Hyundai and Genesis Global Design along with WCOTY jurors and the 2025 World Electric Vehicle award for Hyundai Inster

CATEGORY	VEHICLE	SCORE
World Electric Vehicle	Hyundai Inster	788
	Kia EV3	785
	Porsche Macan	752

Bat out of hell

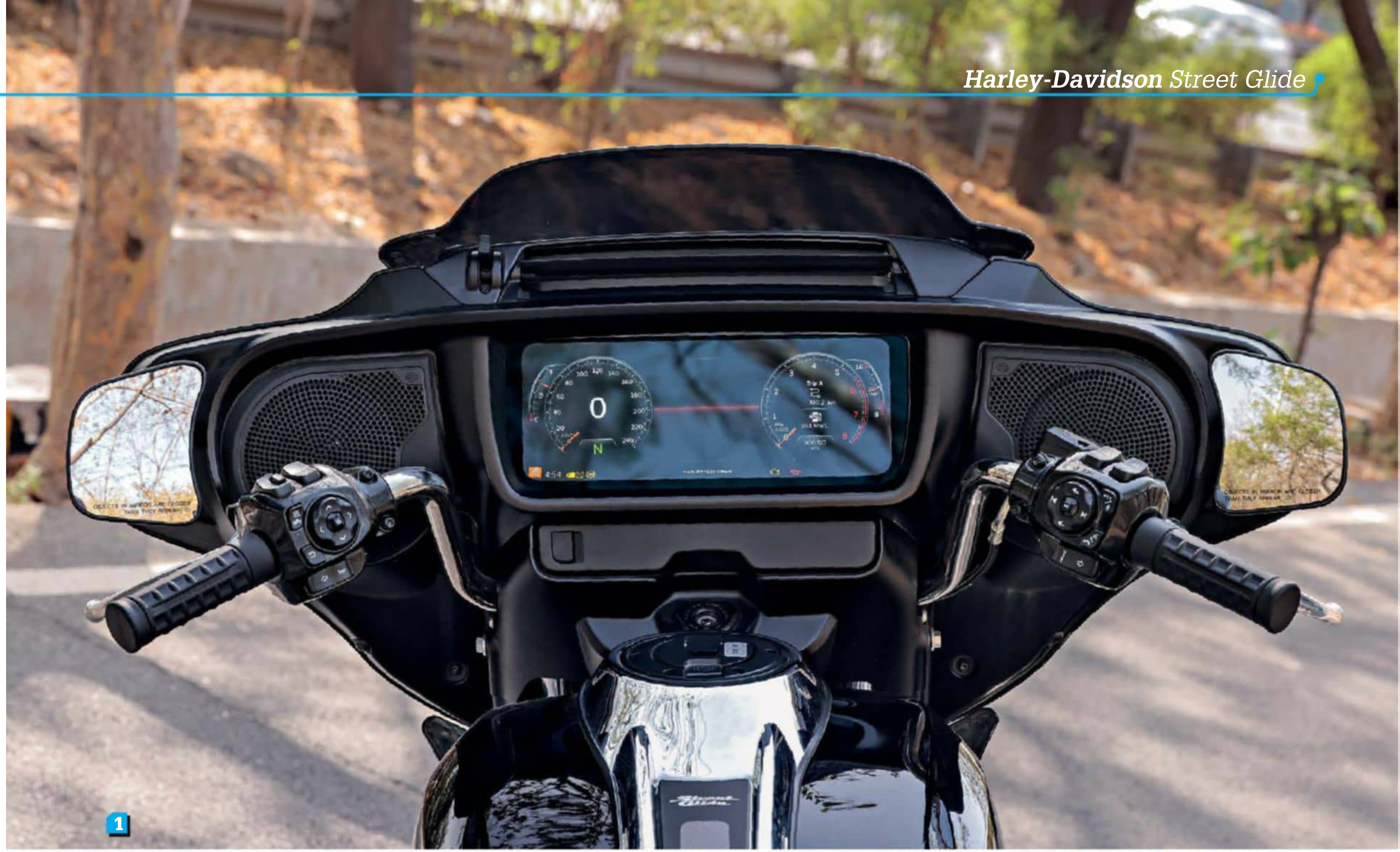
The Street Glide falls under the 'Grand American Touring' section of Harley-Davidson's Indian website. The question is, can it really be a grand tourer for our conditions?

PICTURES Harvinder Singh

There's always a stereotypical image that pops up when one imagines a Harley-Davidson. For the image-conscious, it's usually the typical cruiser, like the Fat Boy or Heritage Classic. But for those with a more practical approach, looking to go places, it has to be their touring range. On our shores, we have quite a wide range of HD motorcycles, but this time around, we'll be tackling the Street Glide, which ironically has street in its name but claims to be a tourer. Is this a motorcycle that strikes a good balance between city and highway riding? Before we tackle that crucial question, let's talk a little about the design language itself.

Every now and then, when I would pass this motorcycle in our parking lot, it would strike me with that 'Vivid Black' paint job, which by the way, costs an extra Rs 40,000. The only colour that comes standard with this motorcycle is the 'Billiard Gray', and there's only one trim level on offer, appropriately, called 'Chrome'. There are another four colour options, some of which attract a premium of Rs 60,000 over this tourer's price, which, anyway, is eye-watering. When I finally got to riding this, massive hunk of metal, plastic and chrome, I fancied its batwing fairing right away. It sets the mood for what's about to come with a motorcycle of this kind. I loved everything from the LED headlamp and the strips of lights on each side flanking the headlight. These are the turn indicators, in case you're wondering. Then there are those cast-aluminium alloy wheels shod in Dunlop tyres, with five spokes, and honestly, again, it looks quite brilliant. Not too much, and not too little either. There's a 19-inch wheel at the front and an 18-inch wheel at the rear, and between these two sits that massive 1,923cc, V-twin motor, officially called the Milwaukee Eight 117, and it is the same motor as the Breakout I rode last month. In its 2024 iteration, which is the model year here, this engine received new liquid-cooled cylinder heads for better thermal management. Another change from the 2023 model year is reduced weight, and this Street Glide is a whole 9kg lighter than the previous model. Apart from this, the front suspension duties are handled by 49mm front forks with dual-bending valves, while the rear gets 76.2mm shocks with preload adjustability. Around the sides, the main focus, apart from the handsome 22.7-litre fuel tank, has to be those aesthetically designed luggage storage spaces on each side. The total storage capacity is said to be 69 litres, nice one Harley. Jokes aside, getting these boxes open is fairly simple with just a latch to open and close, and it has plenty of space for touring and everyday travel. My daily office bag fits in comfortably, which is awesome. At the rear, the Street Glide maintains its good looks with those distinct 2-1-2 exhausts and vertically-mounted LED tail lamps. Honestly, I genuinely liked the way Harley-Davidson has done with this motorcycle from a design standpoint. It looks imposing without looking overbearing, and it has classy touches all around that make it stand out from the crowd.

Before I dive headfirst into the riding dynamics, getting on this motorcycle isn't too difficult with



> WHEN I FINALLY GOT TO RIDING THIS MASSIVE HUNK OF METAL, PLASTIC AND CHROME, I FANCIED ITS BATWING FAIRING RIGHT AWAY

1. Handlebar placement seems apt for long-distance touring, and the array of goodies behind that batwing fairing is immense. 2. The impressive 12.3-inch digital instrument cluster is Street Glide's pièce de résistance. 3 & 4. The switchgear is chunky making it extremely easy to use with gloves on. The controls on the left are dedicated to the menu and configuring the motorcycle. Turn indicators are individual buttons on each side, which takes getting used to

1. A generous dosage of chrome is second nature on a Harley-Davidson, and that massive 1,923cc, V-twin motor looks even better for it. 2. The 19-inch alloy wheels get a five-spoke setup, and a twin-disc one too. 3. Generously sized footpegs are a plus for long-distance riding. 4. There's a total of 69 litres of storage in both the luggage bags, and it feels more than ample for the weekend getaway

> AT THE REAR, THE STREET GLIDE MAINTAINS ITS GOOD LOOKS WITH THOSE DISTINCT 2-1-2 EXHAUSTS AND VERTICALLY-MOUNTED LED TAIL LAMPS

a comfortable seat height of 715mm. The ground clearance, by the way, sits at 140mm, and although that may seem low, I didn't scrape its underbelly anywhere. However, one of its most prominent design elements also doubles up as one from a riding perspective. On the other side of that batwing fairing sits a gorgeous 12.3-inch TFT display, which dwarfs most instrument clusters on expensive cars. The simplistic design, subtle yet clear graphics, make this one of the displays I've ever seen, whether it be a car or a motorcycle, or even an electric scooter. It fits so well with the overall theme. Harley's 'Skyline OS' allows one to choose between three different display types, and has connected features as well. On each side of said screen sit two 5.25-inch speakers with a total output of 100 Watts. I also appreciate the way the side mirrors are tucked away in that fairing, which feels neatly done, although slightly larger units would've helped, given this motorcycle is meant to sit on the highway most of the times. Also, there's a storage space right under the screen that gets a USB-C connector for charging, and is perfect for stowing away a smartphone. The switchgear itself, like the Breakout, is purposeful and chunky, making it extremely easy to operate and use on the go. Getting the Street Glide off its side stand feels like it is supposed to, heavy and daunting, thanks to its behemoth 368kg kerb weight. A click on the starter motor brings the familiar sound of that 117 cubic inch motor coming to life with an unmistakable clatter of that V-twin. That mechanical clunk of the gear selector is also specific to this motor, and that is when things begin to feel lighter and easier. There are gigantic footrests on each side, which made finding a comfortable position effortless. My hands weren't stretched, and the forward-set position of the brake and clutch lever also felt uncomplicated. Get this motor up to speed, and you'll understand Harley-Davidson's intents and purposes almost immediately. This meant to travel far and wide, as long as the tarmac is well laid out. It tackles speed breakers without breaking a sweat, but bad roads aren't its natural habitat. It's best to stick to highways, and the Street Glide will go all day and night long. In the city, though, there are a few issues. For one, if you come to a roundabout or a point for a U-turn, you will immediately feel the front-heavy dynamics. Thanks to that massive equipment list, mostly centred around that screen,

Harley-Davidson Street Glide

Engine	1,923cc, V-twin
Power	109bhp@5,020rpm
Max torque	175Nm@3,500rpm
Gearbox	6-speed
Wheelbase	1,625mm
Ground Clearance	140mm
Kerb weight	368kg
Seat height	715mm
Fuel capacity	22.7 litres
Price:	₹ 38.79 lakh (ex-showroom)

There isn't any back support for the pillion riders, and thanks to those luggage bags, it's not very comfortable either. The rider's seat, though, feels apt for the job at hand

Likes

Performance, design, features

Dislikes

Price, brakes

There's a generous storage tray just below that all-digital instrument console with a USB-C connector for charging

> THAT MECHANICAL CLUNK OF THE GEAR SELECTOR IS ALSO SPECIFIC TO THIS MOTOR, AND THAT IS WHEN THINGS BEGIN TO FEEL LIGHTER AND EASIER

COMPETITION CHECK

BMW R 18 Transcontinental

ENGINE 1,802cc **POWER** 91bhp
TORQUE 158Nm **PRICE** ₹ 32.50 lakh

taking slow turns is a task. The flipside of this has to be the rock-solid stability on open roads, and all this wants to do is go fast in a straight line. It's not exactly a slouch in the corners, but taking corners hard just feels like disrupting the natural order of things. Speaking of which, so does bringing this motorcycle to a stop. The bite from the front brake felt adequate, but the rear brakes weren't up to the task at all. I'm unsure if this was an issue just with the motorcycle sent to us, but the rear brakes required some effort, and the bite from the lever comes too late in the travel. This led to some bottom-clenching moments on our roads, which have a pedestrian or stray two-wheeler jumping out of nowhere now and then.

As far as performance is concerned, this motor has plenty of torque to play with right from the get-go. I found myself using higher gears and low revs to get myself out of most traffic situations, and I honestly didn't mind that at all. There is a question of heat, but it genuinely wasn't as serious as the Breakout, which felt exceedingly hot in heavy traffic. As the revs on the tachometer rise, so does the confidence to go faster. As mentioned before, stability is top-notch and sitting at high speeds isn't an issue thanks to the ample fairing. I found the Street Glide to be deceptively quick also, due to this setup. Another facet I absolutely loved is the attention one gets, and it can be addictive. This thing looks like Batman's Batcycle, and it goes like a bat out of hell, too.

VERDICT

Harley-Davidson has priced the Street Glide at an eye-watering Rs 38.79 lakh (ex-showroom), which by any stretch of the imagination is a fairly hefty sum. For that, the Street Glide comes across as a quintessential American grand tourer, which has ample power and torque for the vast open highways. It looks fantastic, has a basic but solid build quality and isn't lacking in terms of features either. However, the competition does sport a more affordable price tag, and that can be a sore point for some. All in all, this seems to be reserved for those hardcore Harley fanboys with a penchant for long-distance journeys.

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Thinking in the box

TVS has introduced a new top-of-the-line variant of the iQube called the ST. Does it have what it takes to bring back the glory days of the iQube and establish it at the top of the sales charts? We take it for a ride to find answers

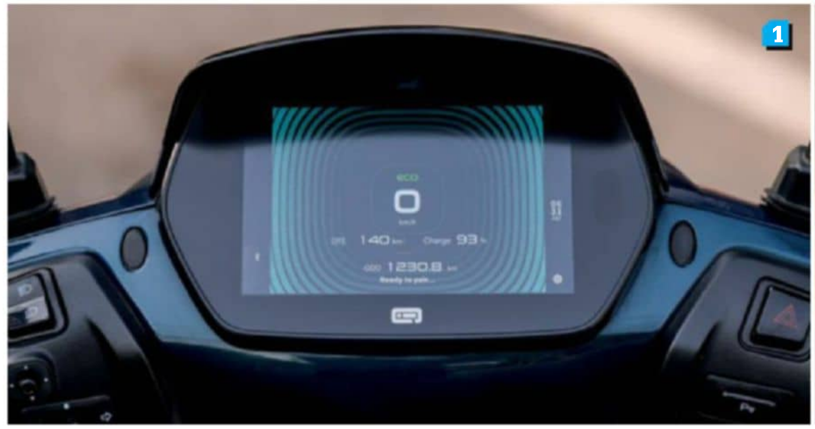
PICTURES Harvinder Singh

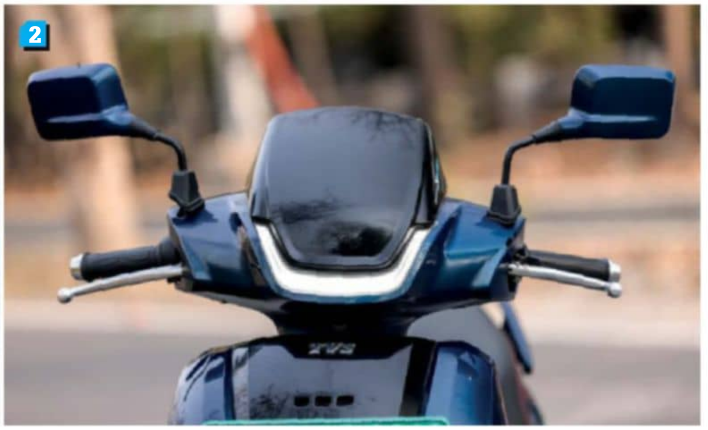
> THE ST DOES NOT RADICALLY CHANGE THE ELEMENTS THE IQUBE IS KNOWN FOR. IT DOES SET ITSELF APART, THOUGH, WITH LOUD 'ST' DECALS ON THE FRONT AND BELOW THE IQUBE BADGE ON THE SIDE

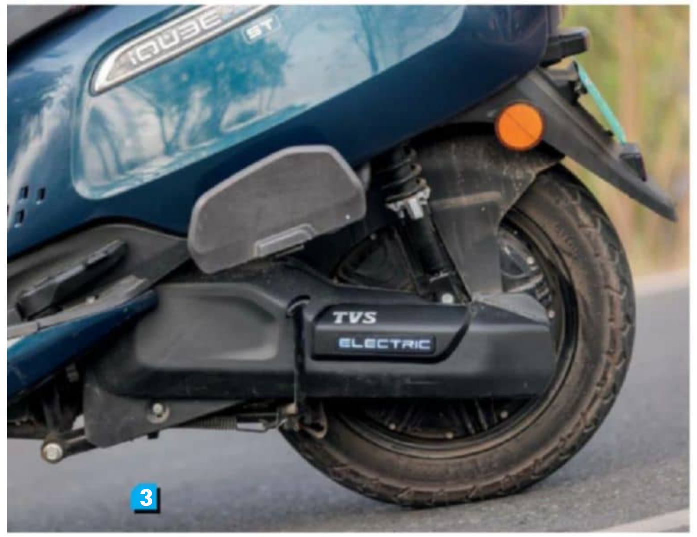
The time is 2020, the government has shifted its focus to electric mobility, and the front-runners are electric two-wheelers, especially scooters. New players are gaining ground, and expectations from traditional OEMs like TVS and Bajaj were high. Enter the iQube, TVS's answer to the future of the family scooter. It's comfortable and also practical. What did the masses make of it? Let's just sum it up by telling you that the scooter hit the half million unit sales milestone some days back. Now, five years since the first iQube made an appearance, we have the iQube ST, a top-of-the-line variant that aims to take forward the legacy in a market where the Chetak has taken the crown as the best seller. How does it fare, and can it take the iQube back to the top? We find out.

Let's start with the first aspect you would notice, design. The ST does not radically change the elements the iQube is known for. It does set itself apart, though, with loud 'ST' decals on the front and below the iQube badge on the side. We got to ride the Starlight Blue Glossy colour, which, in my opinion, looks quite mature and premium with its black elements complementing the blue all across the scooter. The front is dominated by the DRL, headlamps and turn indicators, all of which are powered by LEDs, giving it a sleek, modern look. The rear-view mirrors, however, seem a little out of place with their horizontal, squircle-like design. The rear looks subtle with the taillamp and indicators, also LEDs, along with a Q-Park Assist badge. What particularly stood out to me is the TVS Electric badge on the power unit, where the 'Electric' lights up in blue when the scooter is on or plugged for charge. It gives a back-to-the-future aesthetic in a scooter that is generally subtle in its looks. One interesting part of the iQube is the keyfob (looking at you, affordable variants of cars) that has a button to flip open the key and also has a button with a small light on the corner that can be a great addition to find the keyhole in the dark.

Once you turn the scooter on, take the stand off, and click the start button, there is a pause, as if the iQube is giving you some seconds to plan your day out, after which the display starts up, and you're good to go. Talking of the 7-inch display, TVS could have done a better job with its software. If you are used to the intuitive interfaces of the Olas and Athers, the iQube sure lets you down, reminding one of the old Windows XP times. It can connect with your phone to offer smart features like geofencing, ride data analysis, turn-by-turn navigation (no Google Maps here), among others. You can control it from the joystick above the left handle and touch. Apart from the joystick, you have your usual buttons like the headlight beam control, indicators and buttons on the left side, along with hazard light, parking mode and mode switch on the left. This







1. The 7-inch touchscreen display is bright enough even for harsh sunlight conditions but could do with a better interface. 2. The LED DRL gives the iQube a premium look but the mirrors do look slightly out of place. 3. The most standout feature of the iQube's design is the illuminated TVS Electric badge on the casing of the motor

COMPETITION CHECK

Bajaj Chetak 3501

Battery 3.5kWh
Top speed 73kmph **Range** 153km
Price ₹ 1.34 lakh (ex-showroom)

Ather Rizta

Battery 4.3kWh
Top speed 80kmph **Range** 159km
Price ₹ 1.47 lakh (ex-showroom)

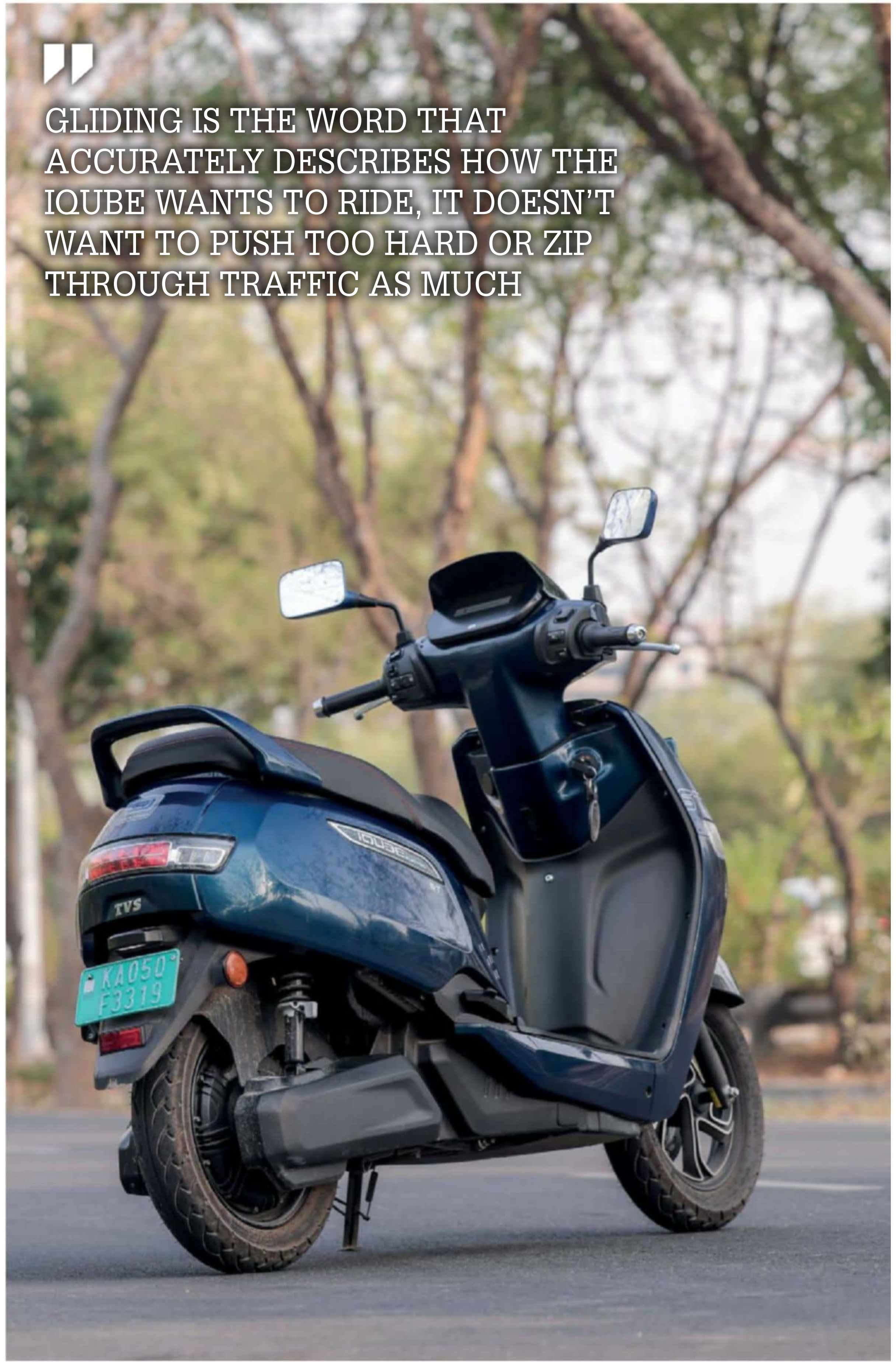
TVS iQube ST

Motor
Hub mounted BLDC motor
Battery
5.1kWh
Power
5.98bhp
Torque
33Nm

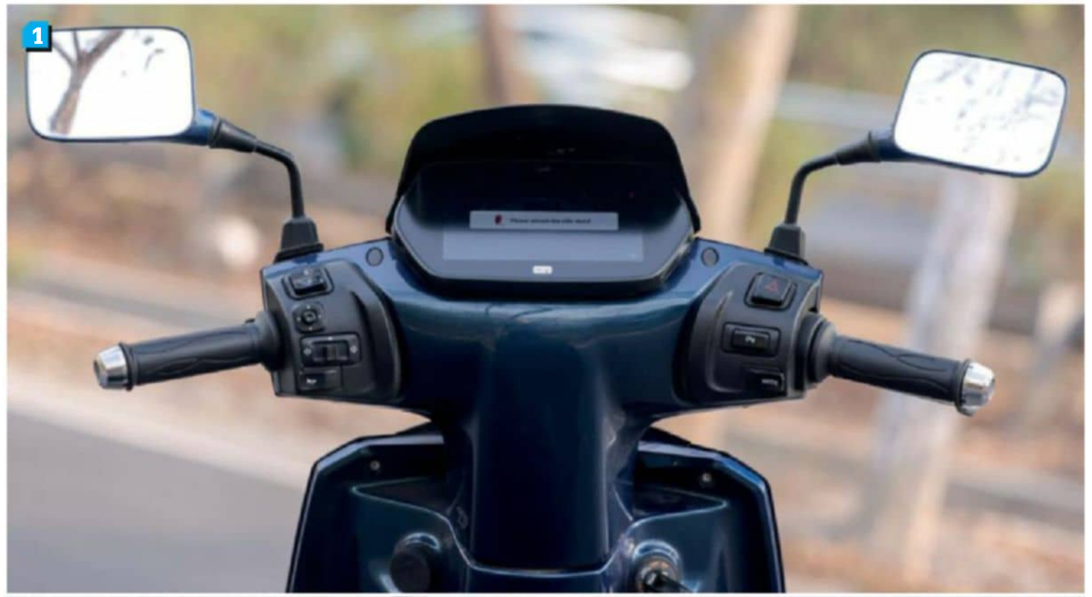
Wheelbase
1301mm
Kerb weight
132kg

Range
150km
Top Speed
82kmph

Price ₹ 1.70 lakh
(ex-showroom)
On sale now



> GLIDING IS THE WORD THAT ACCURATELY DESCRIBES HOW THE IQUBE WANTS TO RIDE, IT DOESN'T WANT TO PUSH TOO HARD OR ZIP THROUGH TRAFFIC AS MUCH



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1. Switchgear of the iQube is tactile and handy, but the start/stop and mode button could take some time to get used to. 2. The charger can be neatly tucked into the boot of the scooter with some space for essentials left. 3. The seat of the iQube is comfortable and well-cushioned. 4. The rear of the ST features an LED taillamp and an Q-Park Assist badge

mode switch doubles as the ignition switch, which might be a learning curve.

Twist the throttle and you instantly get the 33Nm of torque, as expected from an electric. Does it push you back with an acceleration shock? Not really. The iQube is a calmer and tamer version of the electrics we are used to riding. Even in the performance-focused Power mode, the acceleration is linear up to 82kmph. If you prefer the lower riding speeds and higher range, you can shift to the Eco mode. The ride of the iQube is comfortable, as you feel it flow through the rough patches and speed breakers, only having issues on the bigger ones. Something that adds to the comfortable ride is the sound, or lack thereof, from the scooter. It's like you are calmly and silently gliding through the winds. Gliding is the word that accurately describes how the iQube wants to ride, it doesn't want to push too hard or zip through traffic as much. This is well complimented by the seat of the iQube which gets soft cushioning and ample space, making it a good spot for you to be in. The biggest reason that you would want to buy this version of the iQube is the fact that it massively reduces the range anxiety you would associate with an electric scooter, as TVS claims you can run it for 150km on the Eco mode and 110km in the Power mode from its 5.1kWh battery before needing a top-up. While these numbers might not be the best of the segment, they should be good even if you have a long daily commmute. After that, you can charge it from 0 to 80 per cent in four hours and eighteen minutes with the onboard charger. Speaking of which, I believe that TVS needs to up their game with the charger connector, but the current one feels slightly flimsy and cumbersome when connecting. Once charged, you can store this charger in the 32-litre boot that also offers a USB Type-C charging port. Accessing the boot, though, continues to be via a key-fob mounted on the rear panel, which is quite inconvenient and feels like an ode to the classics.

To sum up our experience, the iQube ST continues with what makes the iQube a solid offering, with the fundamentals in place. However, the lack of innovation and price compared to the competition has put it slightly behind the brands that drop new features every fortnight.

Likes

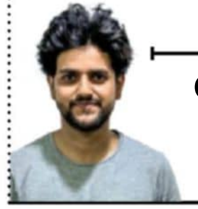
Ride comfort, range, TVS Electric badge

Dislikes

Performance, screen UI, charging connector

VerdicT

The iQube ST keeps the iQube formula of a good ride quality, range and capable mechanics intact. But it becomes hard to justify its price tag in a market with increasing competition, better tech, and less government support. I look forward to the tech and feature updates TVS brings in its future versions. That said, if you are in the market for a no-nonsense electric family scooter for city commutes, backed by an established marque which does not cause much range anxiety, the iQube ST is a good choice.



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Middle child

Hero's newest member of the Xoom family is a 125cc, and has its sights set on the sportier side of the 125cc segment. We hop on the saddle and tell you how it stacks up

PICTURES Harvinder Singh

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125

The Xoom 125 marks Hero MotoCorp's latest step into the premium scooter space, aiming to blend sporty styling with everyday practicality. As an elder sibling to the Xoom 110, this new 125cc scooter competes in a segment where sharp design, strong performance, and modern features are key selling points. With the rise of performance-oriented scooters in India, Hero's new offering must strike the right balance between power, comfort, and efficiency.

At first glance, the Xoom 125 makes an impression with its aggressive styling, LED lighting, and a muscular stance that sets it apart from conventional 125cc commuters. Hero promises a refined engine, advanced tech, and a ride experience that caters to both city commutes and weekend getaways. Features like a digital instrument cluster, connected technology, and a well-tuned suspension setup add to its appeal.

The big question is — does the Xoom 125 have what it takes to shake up the highly competitive 125cc scooter segment, where names like the TVS Ntorq, and Suzuki Avenis dominate? We put the Xoom 125 through its paces to see if it truly delivers on performance, comfort, and value. Let's dive in.

👍 ***Likes***
Design, Price

👎 ***Dislikes***
Plastic quality

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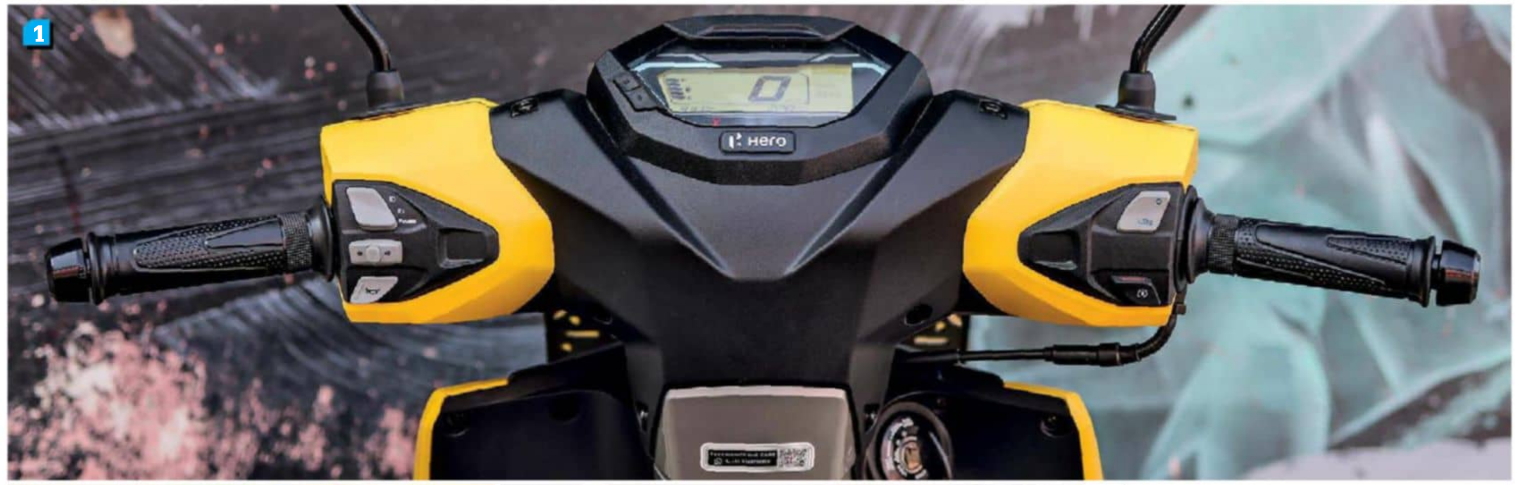

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1. One of the neater design elements are the way the switch cubes are cleanly integrated into the fascia. 2. Standard LCD display is clear and easy to read but feels a little dated. 3. There's storage at the front but one of the things I really don't like is the way the charger is integrated. 4. There is 17 litres of underseat storage is sufficient but could have been more, doesn't fit a full size helmet

COMPETITION CHECK

TVS Ntorq 125

Engine 124.8cc
Power 9.2bhp **Torque** 10.5Nm
Price ₹**94,155** (ex-showroom)

Suzuki Avenis

ENGINE 124.3cc
POWER 8.5bhp **TORQUE** 10Nm
PRICE ₹ 93,202 (ex-showroom)

The Xoom 125's design inspiration comes from the Falcon. Look closely, and you will see elements of the inspiration, like the beaky nose and the sharp line rising upwards on the body. It's a distinctive design overall, and it sets right into its inherently sporty positioning. It's got a V-shaped LED DRL in the front that outlines the headlamp unit, which houses a projector LED headlamp. The indicators on the front sit flush on the headunit and look well integrated, adding to the premium appeal. The Xoom also has a rather wide and large seat with 17 litres of storage underneath.

The cushioning on the seat, too, is a decent balance of plush and firm, making it easy to spend long hours in the

Hero Xoom 125 ZX

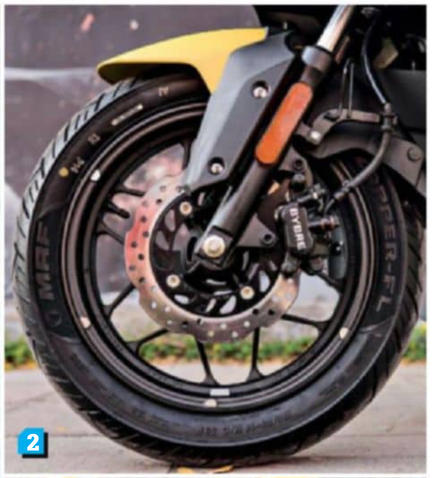
Engine
124.6cc, single-cyl
Power
9.8bhp@7,250rpm
Torque
10.4Nm@6,000rpm
Gearbox
CVT

Wheelbase
1,327mm
Kerb weight
121kg

Fuel capacity
5 litres
Seat height
777mm

Price ₹ 95,263 (ex-showroom, pan-India)
On sale Now

> LOOK CLOSELY, AND YOU WILL SEE ELEMENTS OF THE INSPIRATION, LIKE THE BEAKY NOSE AND THE SHARP LINE RISING UPWARDS ON THE BODY



1. In this matte-lime shade, the Xoom seems to be really channeling its focus on the competition. 2. ByBre 220mm disc inspire confidence, and are pretty progessive through the action. 3. The 125cc motor does make its fair share of vibrations

seat. It also gets a twin-pod glove box with a mobile charging port integrated in, although unlike the Destini, which featured an inset port, the Xoom 125 features a wire with a USB port on the end of it, which feels a little flimsy. The sharp flowing lines of the design make for a slightly cramped floor board, which could be a dealbreaker for those who like to carry their backpack on the foot board. There are also some pretty glaring panel gaps, and the plastics used on the bodywork do seem to be a little below par. Then there are the 14-inch alloy wheels (On this top variant that we reviewed), which instantly convey the Xoom 125's sporty intent, while suspension duties are managed between 37mm dia forks upfront and a single-sided shock at the rear. Overall, the design is very cohesive and modern, but a touch of quality would help in making it more attractive to potential customers, who are ready to pay the premium in the 125cc segment.

Powering the Xoom 125 is the same 125cc single cylinder motor that we've seen on the Destini 125, although in the Xoom, to match its sporty intent, it makes 0.8bhp more and pairs it with 10.4Nm of torque. It also makes the additional power 250rpm higher than its commuter-focused sibling. The motor itself is quite linear, and there's a nice strong wave of power right from the lower reaches of the rev band which is showcased in the fact that the Xoom 125's 7.6 seconds 0-60kmph time is the new benchmark for the segment. Post the 60kmph mark, the power does start to plateau, but there is still a linear run to 95kmph, after which there is a significant drop-off in the power delivery.

Where the Xoom 125 shines is in the way it handles, turn-ins are fast and even at the upper echelons of the speedometer; turn-ins are confidence-inspiring and encourage you to push the envelope further. Now this is largely as a result of the 14-inch wheels with relatively wide-section tyres that do improve stability and even the scooter's ability to tackle bad roads. Although this has a small trade off in terms of the way it rides over smaller bumps, with a lot of feedback coming through to the rider. Luckily, the 37mm diameter front fork and the single-sided monoshock do an amicable job of smoothing it out. The stopping power of this top-end version of the Xoom 125 comes from a 220mm disc upfront and a drum at the rear. And is confidence inspiring to say the least, with a lot of feedback at the levers.

VERDICT

Overall, the Xoom 125 ticks all the boxes and comes together as a cohesive alternative to the other scooters in the segment. And at Rs 92,900 (ex-showroom) for the top-end variant that you see on this page, it is about Rs 1,000 more expensive than the Ntorq 125, which makes it price competitive as well.

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BELL
REVOLT
REVOLT
BLAZE X
TVS

For the masses

Revolt has been offering electric motorcycles for a while now. The fifth electric motorcycle from the company is the Blaze X. What all does it offer, and how is it to ride? We find out

PICTURES Harvinder Singh

If you look at the electric two-wheeler market, you will notice that it is dominated by scooters. Interestingly, electric motorcycles are found in much lesser numbers. That leaves us with the Revolt range of motorcycles, which is one of the leaders in this segment. Now, the company has added another new model called the Revolt Blaze X. We got to try it out at a go-kart track, and here is how it performed.

The Revolt Blaze X seems to be aimed at the executive commuter segment, and as a result, the design is kept rather simple. One gets telescopic suspension up front and a round headlight, which houses LED lamps and an LED DRL as well. The winkers are LED too. The bike comes with alloy wheels, which are shod with 17-inch tyres at both

1. Copious amounts of plastic cover the battery pack and motor unit of the bike. 2. LED headlamp also incorporates an LED DRL. 3. All digital IP is kept simple and straight forward. It also offers Bluetooth connecivity. 4. Switchgear quality should improve. 5. Charging port on the side. 6. Disc brakes offered at both ends

> AS MENTIONED EARLIER, THE REVOLT BLAZE X IS POISED AS AN EVERYDAY COMMUTER, AND HENCE, ALL THE SPECS ARE TAILORED FOR THAT PURPOSE. IT IS ALSO EASY TO GET USED TO THIS MOTORCYCLE

ends. There is a 240mm disc brake up front and the same has been deployed on the rear wheel. In profile, the Revolt Blaze X impresses with a well-designed tank shroud that houses the removable battery pack. The shroud on the side has been spruced up with decals as well, but it sure looks a bit odd. The seat is a long unit, and at a height of 790mm, it will keep most riders comfortable. The tail section houses an LED taillight. As far as the instrument panel goes, the Revolt Blaze X gets a digital unit that is simple and yet informative. The six inch LCD digital cluster integrates 4G telematics, GPS, and Internet of Things (IoT) functions that include mobile connectivity, geo-fencing, and OTA updates. The quality of the switchgear could have been better. As mentioned earlier, the Revolt Blaze X is poised as an everyday commuter, and hence, all the specs are tailored for that purpose. The motor is rated at 2.8kW and sends power to the rear wheel using a chain drive. The IP67-rated lithium-ion battery is rated at 3.24kWh and promises to offer 150km in eco mode. From a regular charger, the battery will take eight hours and 30 minutes to acquire 80 per cent charge. However, if a fast charger is deployed the same can be achieved in one hour and 20 minutes.

The Blaze X is easy to get used to. It is a very conventional motorcycle; hence, most riders will find it natural when it comes to riding. The acceleration is controlled via three ride modes, each with their own personas. Mode 1 is the laziest of them all and quite clearly aimed at maximising range, while the other two sure feel faster. What Revolt needs to work on is the throttle modulation, which lacks progression. It is more like an on-and-off switch with a top-speed lock function. We must add here that the Blaze X comes with a reverse mode as well. However, operating it is a bit tricky as it is a spring-loaded switch. One has to hold on to it with the right thumb and then accelerate simultaneously to use it. Perhaps Revolt could have offered a dedicated switch for this function rather than combining it with all other modes. Thanks to the bike being rather light, it is easy to ride it too. Around this tight Go-Kart track, we sure had fun, and this also reveals that the Blaze X should be easy to haul around town. Ride quality, though, is something we need to discuss once we get to ride the bike on city streets.

The Revolt features a long seat and a comfortable height that is suitable for most frames

Revolt Blaze X

Engine
2.8kW electric motor
Max Torque
45Nm

Range
149km (IDC)
Kerb weight
113kg

Top speed
NA

Price Rs 1.14 lakh
(ex-showroom, Delhi)
On sale Now

COMPETITION CHECK

TVS iQube
MOTOR 4.4kW **RANGE** 75km
TOP SPEED 78kmph **PRICE** ₹ 1 lakh*

*(ex-showroom, Delhi. Incl state subsidy)

Likes
Price range, utility value

Dislikes
Quality, throttle modulation

VERDICT

The Blaze X is not built to cater to an enthusiast. It is for those who commute considerable distance within the city everyday. For this specific purpose, the Blaze X does its job well. It feels light and is easy to ride through tight spaces. Moving it around is also not an issue and at the same time, the conventional riding position keeps things comfortable. To sum it up then, the Revolt at Rs 1.14 lakh is a good purchase from a utility point of view.

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KA05Q
J6961

Drop the base

The buzz around Honda's two electric scooters has been significant, with the Activa e: mostly taking centre stage. However, it's the more affordable sibling that is more likely to make an impact on the sales charts

PICTURES Harvinder Singh

Honda QC1

Motor
1.8kW (BLDC)
Max Power
2.4bhp
Torque
77Nm

Wheelbase
1,275mm
Ground clearance
169mm
Kerb weight
89.5kg

Top speed
50kmph
Range
80km

Price Rs 90,000
(ex-showroom)
On sale Now

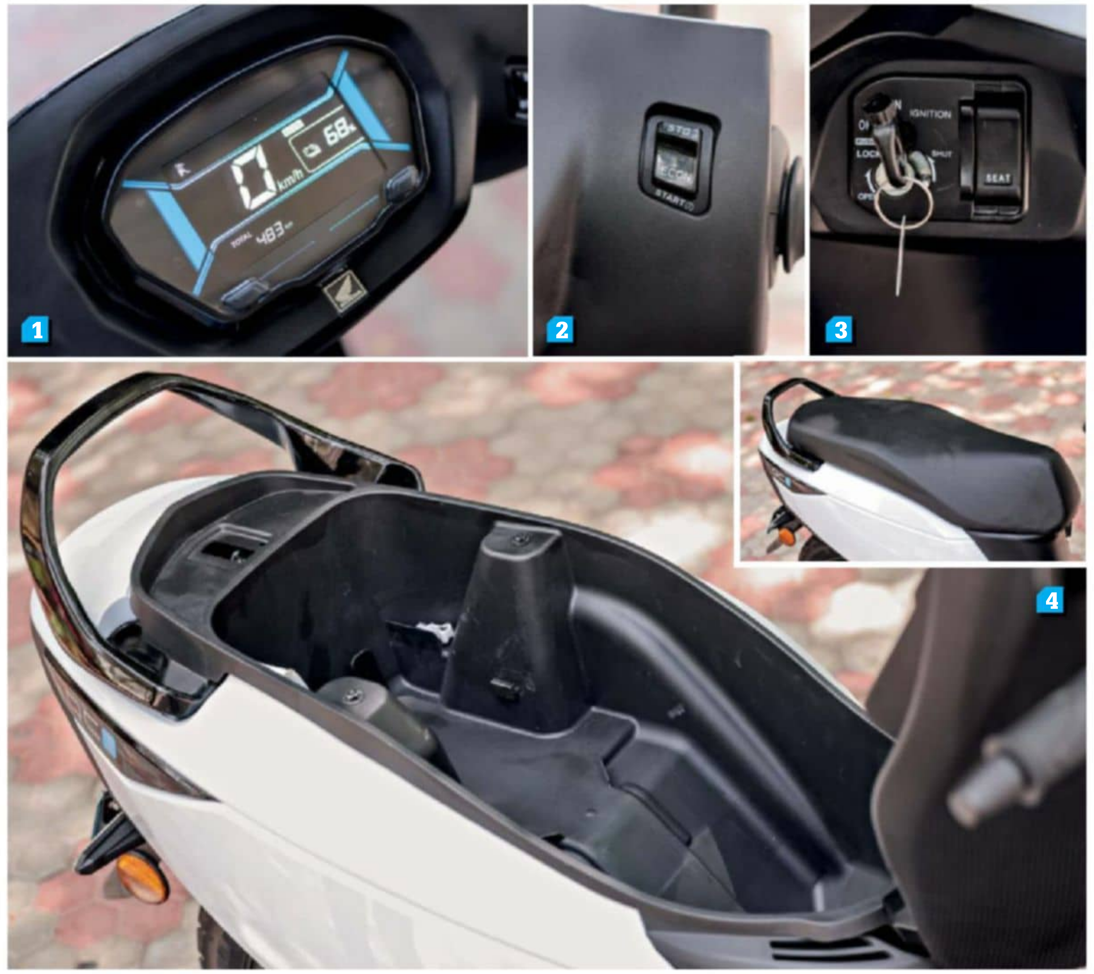
COMPETITION CHECK

Bajaj Chetak 2903
Battery 2.9kWh
Top speed 63kmph **Range** 123km
Price ₹ 98,498 (ex-showroom)

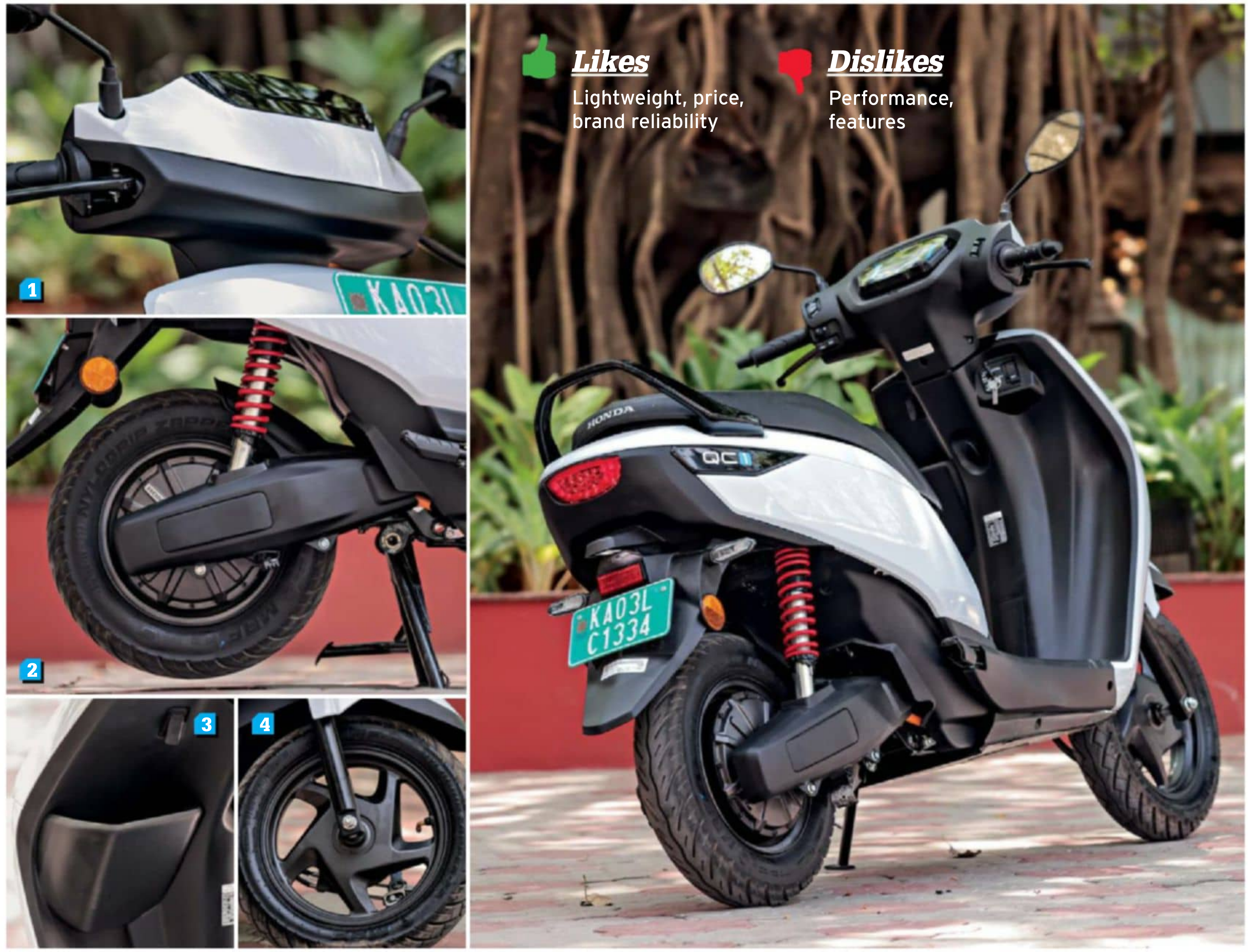
Our country is a budget-conscious one. As an automotive journalist, it's easy to lose track of this fact, given our daily dealings in horsepower and torque. A quick glance at sales charts will reveal that trusted brands with reliable products rule the roost. Indians demand an almost unbelievable cost-to-reliability ratio, and hence, the Japanese have a good handle on our market. Take Honda Motorcycles and Scooters India, for example. The Activa is by far the most popular scooter to ever roam the various streets across the country. Can the same be repeated with the new Activa e: and QC1? If price is anything to go by, the QC1 seems more of an equivalent to the original Activa than its namesake. As product strategy is concerned, the QC1 is meant to be the easy step into the Honda EV world, and sports a lower price tag.

As far as design is concerned, the QC1 takes a straightforward approach. From the front, at least at a distance, it's easy to confuse the Activa e: with the QC1, but the lack of a DRL gives it away instantly. Only when one swivels to the side do the differences become more noticeable. There's a badge with the scooter's name on the rear end of the side panel on each side, and a five-step adjustable hydraulic rear suspension, with those red springs that stand out. Around the rear, there's a simple LED tail lamp flanked by indicators on each side. Overall, it is a well-rounded design and keeps things purposely elementary. As far as features are concerned, the QC1 comes with a five-inch LCD, which, in all honesty, I preferred to the full-kitted-out display on the battery-powered Activa. It has a peak brightness of 450 nits and is IP65 rated. Furthermore, it's easy to read, has a large font size and almost seems catered to a more elderly target audience. Other than this, there's a single storage space in the front apron, which has a 15W USB-C charging port right above it. The main highlight with the QC1, especially when compared to the electric Activa, is the fairly healthy 26-litre boot space, which is enough to store a half-face helmet. There's also a cleaner layout for the switchgear, with riding modes on the right of the screen and a toggle for the high and low beam.

> FROM THE FRONT, AT LEAST AT A DISTANCE, IT'S EASY TO CONFUSE THE ACTIVA E: WITH THE QC1, BUT THE LACK OF A DRL GIVES IT AWAY INSTANTLY



1. There's a five-inch LCD, which may feel dated to some, but I feel it fits perfectly. 2. Riding modes, which include 'Econ' and 'Standard', get a dedicated physical key, which is handy. 3. The traditional key, instead of all the smart ones out there, ironically feels like a breath of fresh air. Anyone familiar with a Honda scooter will get it right away. 4. The seat feels spacious and comfortable, and the underseat storage of 26 litres is also ample for storing the weekly groceries



Likes
Lightweight, price, brand reliability

Dislikes
Performance, features

1. The lack of a DRL on the front-end of the handlebar marks a clear distinction between the Activa e: and QC1. 2. BLDC motor doesn't have a lot of grunt for spirited riding. 3. Storage space under USB-C charging port measures in at 1.45 litres, more than enough to store a smartphone easily. 4. Alloy wheels are standard, but there's no option for a disc brake variant

Just like its more expensive sibling, we got a chance to ride the QC1 in peak Bengaluru traffic, which meant that this was a thorough city-based test. We couldn't get up to highway speeds, and to be honest, this is a scooter best reserved for daily office commutes in and around the city. Don't forget, the more affordable QC1 doesn't have the two removable batteries, which means there's storage space, unlike the Activa e. The performance of the Brushless DC (BLDC) hub-mounted electric motor is mild and muted. The peak power output sits at 1.8kW, which means acceleration is basic in both ride modes - Eco and Standard. This EV is in no hurry to get to its destination, and honestly, that seems like the whole point. The top speed for the Standard mode is around 50kmph and 30kmph for Eco. Also, the riding position felt more knees up than the Activa e, thanks to the battery pack positioning. The QC1 can be charged from 0 to 100 per cent in 6 hours and 50 minutes via 330W off-board home charger, which can be plugged into the IP66-rated inlet port. The braking performance of both the drums also felt adequate, given the QC1's light weight. Once again, Honda's choice of only offering the QC1 with a fixed battery and not a swappable one is puzzling.

VERDICT

The QC1 retails at Rs 90,000 (ex-showroom), and that is good because it feels like a scooter built to a budget, and that isn't necessarily a bad thing. However, its range and slow charging times aren't ideal, and rivals are slightly better in these fields. All things considered, the QC1 comes across as a lightweight, easy-to-handle, and unoffensive electric scooter that's specifically made to cater either to beginners or the elderly. Also, don't forget the peace of mind with Honda ownership, which is its strongest plus.

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Maruti Suzuki Swift

Model **ZXi+**

Six airbags | **Follow Me Home** | Tilt adjust wheel | **Hill-start Assist** | **Automatic** climate control | **Electric** ORVMs | **Keyless** entry I **9-in touchscreen** with wireless Apple CarPlay, Android Auto | **Reversing** camera | **Arkamys** premium 6 speaker audio | **Wireless** charging | **Cruise** Control | **Warranty** 3yrs/100,000 km

Test Started **September 2024/649km**
Current ODO reading **7,002km**
Mileage this month **772km**
Efficiency this month **15.7kmpl**

We've put the Maruti Suzuki Swift to almost every test in urban environs, and, for the most part, it's come out on top. It has the right balance of features and creature comforts on the inside, and every aspect seems to focus on the urban use case. I've often speculated that the trade-off for the Swift's strong initial acceleration in this three-pot avatar would be the motor's highway manners. I expected triple-digit cruising to be gruff and have a lot of NVH being transferred to the cabin. But here's the thing, I strongly speculate that while Maruti hasn't talked about the manual five-speed transmission on offer with this new three-cylinder Z12c, I suspect that Maruti Suzuki has heavily reworked the ratios to meet the motor square. For one, the first three gears are shorter, which is leaning into the motor's inherent low-end skew, it's what makes the three-pot feel that much more urgent in the journey to triple digits, but it's the next two gears that make highway cruising better despite what first impressions might lead one to believe. The fourth gear is essentially top-gear for the Swift; it is slightly taller, meaning that you can essentially top out the Swift in fourth gear at six-odd thousand rpm. This is the point where you're getting to cruise speed on the highway. Fifth is an extra-long overdrive that actually might beat the 2:1 ratio, once you're at cruise, slot it into fifth, and you're straight down to half of whatever rpm you were previously running at, making for easy cruising, not much filtering into the cabin. The only real downside I can see here is needing to downshift for overtakes, which brings back the chomp-at-the-bit attitude of the motor but on the plus side, there is still plenty of performance to make most overtakes with ease.

> THE NEXT TWO GEARS THAT MAKE HIGHWAY CRUISING BETTER DESPITE WHAT FIRST IMPRESSIONS MIGHT LEAD ONE TO BELIEVE

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The interiors are laid-out neatly, although all-black cabin does reduce the sense of space

Maruti Suzuki Dzire

Model **ZXi+ AMT**

Six airbags | **Sunroof** | Tilt adjust wheel | **Hill-start Assist** | **Automatic** climate control | **Electric** ORVMs | **Keyless** entry I **Remote** boot release | **9-in touchscreen** with wireless Apple CarPlay, Android Auto | **360-degree** camera | **Arkamys** premium 6 speaker audio | **Wireless** charging | **Cruise** Control | **Warranty** 3yrs/100,000 km

Test Started **February 2025/2,022km**
Current ODO reading **5,044km**
Mileage this month **1,016km**
Efficiency this month **16.6kmpl**

It's time we spoke about one aspect of car buying in India that's become more prominent in recent years and continues to grow. Safety, and there's no doubt about the fact that it is important. The welfare of one's loved ones and oneself is often the guiding principle in the buying process, and it shouldn't be any other way. If a car has a better safety rating, specifically the Global NCAP ratings, it would be higher up on my list than one that doesn't have one. The Dzire is mighty impressive in this respect, and it has a five-star Global NCAP rating. From the previous models that were tested, this is a big step up for the most successful four-wheeler manufacturer in the country. Maruti Suzuki has done well to update the 'HEARTECT' platform, without compromising its ride quality or even handling dynamics. Honestly, the Dzire has one of the best chassis setups for this size and price of any car. Only the Swift pips the Dzire in terms of sheer agility, thanks to its shorter wheelbase and length. Coming back to safety, right from the base LXi variant, there are six airbags, reverse parking sensors, ABS with EBD, Hill Hold Assist, and Electronic Stability Program, which honestly is fantastic. Our top-of-the-line ZXi+ AMT has the bells and whistles besides, like Tyre Pressure Monitoring System (TPMS), reverse camera parking and day/night adjustable IRVM. There's a reassuring feeling that comes with driving a car that has been tested to a certain safety standard. Just another reason to appreciate this people's champion of a car.

> OUR TOP-OF-THE-LINE ZXI+ AMT HAS THE BELLS AND WHISTLES BESIDES, LIKE TPMS, REVERSE CAMERA PARKING AND DAY/NIGHT ADJUSTABLE IRVM

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The Dzire comes loaded with a boatload of safety equipment, prime of which are the six airbags, which are available right from the base LXi variant

INTRODUCTION

Kia Syros

Model **HTX+(O)**

Test Started **May 2025/2,053km**

Tenure/ Target mileage **6 months/10,000km**

Mileage this month **NA**

Efficiency this month **NA**

Six airbags | **Panoramic sunroof** | Tilt adjust wheel | **Automatic** climate control | **Electric** ORVMs | **Keyless** entry | **Remote** boot release | **12.3-in touchscreen** with wireless Apple CarPlay, Android Auto | **360-degree** camera | **Harman Kardon** 8 speaker audio | **Wireless** charging |Level 2 ADAS | **Warranty** 3yrs/Unlimited km

The 12.3-inch instrument panel is slick, and the graphics are fresh for Kia. Our long term Syros starts its tenure wish just over 2,000km on the odo

I absolutely love the Syros' dashboard layout which focuses on maximised space, and a slick design aesthetic

> WHERE THE SYROS WINS OUT ARE THE SEATS, AND THE INCREDIBLE AMOUNT OF HEADROOM AND SHOULDER ROOM THAT EACH OCCUPANT ENJOYS

My tryst with diesels has been informative, and spending six months with the Tata Nexon diesel made me gain immense love for what has become in today's day and age, the cruder fuel, if one looks at the market. But some automakers have not given up, god bless them, Kia being one of them, they offer diesel powertrains in all of their internal combustion engined models, and the latest one, the Syros has driven into our fleet, in its top spec HTX Plus (O) AT trim. And while discussions about the Syros will begin with the looks, I am gonna talk about my first impressions of the cabin first. Unlike what we expected, the Syros is based on the same platform as the Hyundai Exter and Aura, and not the Kia Sonet/Hyundai Venue platform, and this means that the Korean automaker's second sub-4m offering is distinctly different to the Sonet. And this difference is immediately apparent the moment one steps inside, the sheer maximisation of space is comparable to electric vehicles. The expansive dash layout is neat, and layered which works well with the storage shelf on the left side and the triple display panel, including the instrumentation, infotainment and the climate control panel. But where the Syros wins out are the seats, and the incredible amount of headroom and shoulder room that each occupant enjoys. The driver's seat is power adjustable, while all four seats get ventilation. From the time I have spent in the driver's seat, my opinions are mostly positive, but the Syros has not been made for driving pleasure, the steering has a slightly squared off shape, and is really smooth and light, but lacks accuracy, hence is quite comfortable to use in the city, but fun isn't something it translates very well. Even the seating position, with all the adjustability, feels right only in a more laid back setting. The SUV's ride is brilliant, but undulations that are sharper do filter in, and taking corners and curves is a task that has to be done with care. Through the course of the next six months, we are going to tell you how Kia's smartest offering for the Indian market fares.

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Hero Xtreme 125R

Digital display **Yes** | Tachometer **Yes** | Fuel gauge **Yes** | Electric start **Yes** | Disc brakes **Front** | Tyres **Tubeless** | Price **Rs 1,00,100** (ex-showroom) | Warranty **5 years or 70,000 Km**

Model **ABS**

Test Started **April 2025/5,124km**

Current odo reading **5,768km**

Mileage this month **644km**

Overall fuel efficiency **42kmpl**

The Xtreme's 124.7cc, single-cylinder engine suits can give you both efficiency and thrill

I've been riding the Xtreme 125R for a while now and as described in the last report, I was fairly impressed by its design, so this month I set out to find how well that design matches with its performance. Let me remind you that I said that it looks like a more powerful motorcycle. Does that mean it disappoints in performance? Not quite. What you need to keep in mind here is that the powertrain is a 124.7cc engine that puts out 11.4bhp and 10.5Nm, which aren't very high numbers, but the way that power is delivered is the impressive part. For starters, it has a throaty exhaust note which is a delight to hear when you start the Xtreme up, and yet the motor feels refined. Once you're on the road, it gives you a choice, either you ride the relaxed way, suiting your pocket, thanks to the 50kmpl+ fuel efficiency, or the spirited way (like me), enjoying the thrill and gusts of wind after a long day at work. While the latter brings down fuel efficiency to the 40kmpl mark, the fun you have pushing the envelope on this 136kg two-wheel machine is priceless! Now, I agree the low-end power is not that impressive, which is slightly cumbersome in traffic, but you rev it to the top-end and it will win you back. A 60-70kmph speed range is where the Xtreme sits most comfortably, but when pushed hard, it can accelerate to around 105kmph and maintain that speed.

> IT HAS A BASSY, THROATY EXHAUST NOTE WHICH IS A DELIGHT TO HEAR WHEN YOU START UP

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WRAP UP

Royal Enfield Guerrilla 450

Digital display **Yes** | Tachometer **Yes** | Fuel gauge **Yes** | Electric start **Yes** | Disc brakes **Both** | Tyres **Tubeless** | Price **Rs 2.54 lakh** (ex-showroom) | Warranty **3 years/30,000km**

Model **Yellow Ribbon**

Test Started **November 2024/705km**

Current ODO reading **3,611km**

Total mileage **2,906km**

Overall fuel efficiency **26kmpl**

Feel good

1. The meatiest part of the Guerrilla 450's personality is the 452cc, single-cylinder motor, which churns out 40bhp and 40Nm of torque. 2. Royal Enfield has given this feisty roadster an interesting mix of colours, that suits its overall personality

Feel bad

The 17-inch wheels are shod in knobby tyres, which honestly feels a little confusing for a roadster

Royal Enfields have been a staple in Auto Today's long-term fleet. I'd go so far as to say that there's a specific RE for each team member. Dipayan was always sweet on his Himalayan, Rahul preferred the timeless design of the Classic, and our editor happens to own an Interceptor. As for me, I've said before and I'll say it again, Enfields have been the default choice. The Guerrilla 450 is a different story, though. On the surface, it's a slightly different form of the Himalayan, but dig a little deeper and you'll find that it truly lives up to its name. Guerrilla, according to the Cambridge Dictionary, is a member of an unofficial military group that is trying to change the government by making sudden, unexpected attacks on the official army forces. No, this Royal Enfield isn't trying to overthrow governments, but it does upset the natural order of things. It's fast, looks modern and handles quite well. On top of that, its flat handlebar, slightly rear-set footpegs and upright riding position make it a hoot to ride. In the past, this simply wasn't expected of a RE, but things have changed, and I'm all for it. Royal Enfield plans to make an impact on the global motorcycle market, and I feel that the Guerrilla 450 is a solid step in the right direction. Sadly, its time in our fleet has come to an end. But, I would be remiss if I didn't mention just how much we all enjoyed our time on this motorcycle. It doesn't conform, it isn't trying to fill market space, it's just out there to have fun with its short-stroke motor, at least when compared to other REs. The only real chink in its armour that I found was the lack of grip from the tyres, but apart from that, it hits the sweet spot.

> NO, THIS ROYAL ENFIELD ISN'T TRYING TO OVERTHROW GOVERNMENTS, BUT IT DOES UPSET THE NATURAL ORDER OF THINGS

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Ather Rizta

Digital display **Yes** | Tachometer **No** | Fuel gauge **Yes** | Electric start **Yes** | Disc brakes **Front** | Tyres **Tubeless** | Price **Rs 1.49 lakh (ex-showroom, Delhi)** | Warranty **3 years/30,000km**

Model **3.7kW**

Test Started
January 2025/137km

Current ODO reading
1,311km

Mileage this month
185km

Efficiency this month
110km/charge

There has been a lot of chatter about the Ather Rizta and that revolves around the design of the scooter especially the rear section. The one thing to note here is that unlike the Ather 450 series, the Rizta is targeted at the family buyer and hence space is of the utmost priority. The straightened out rear section then allowed designers to install a larger seat. Most importantly, the seat is not raking upwards and this allows women to sit one-sided more comfortably. This in turn solves many a problem of this platform. Quite clearly then, it is a case of function over form and we definitely prefer the function part of things. Could the rear end be designed better? Yes, for sure. But is it a deal breaker? Not at all.

Next up we experienced the newest tech made available on the Rizta recently. The Skid Control tech came handy a few days back when it rained in this part of the world. I took a shortcut to avoid traffic and to my surprise that section had gotten rather muddy. I found the gap and opened the throttle. Being in Zip mode, the Rizta shot through and for a fraction of a second I glanced at the dash and saw a little thing blinking. I rode off and later realised that it was Skid Control! Quite simply then, it was the scooter and not the rider in control. Furthermore, the MRF tyres too hold well and offer incredible grip even in these conditions. Before we wrap up this report, I must add that the Rizta has developed a few squeaks primarily from the rear suspension. A bit of a good clean and some WD40 should take care of it. Will update on the situation next month.

> I RODE OFF AND LATER REALISED THAT IT WAS SKID CONTROL! QUITE SIMPLY THEN, IT WAS THE SCOOTER AND NOT THE RIDER IN CONTROL

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The rear tyre provided by MRF offers ample grip even in wet and muddy conditions. Skid Control works silently in the background

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TVS Juipter

Digital display **Yes** | Tachometer **No** | Fuel gauge **Yes** | Electric start **Yes** | Disc brakes **Front** | Tyres **Tubeless** | Price **Rs 91,891** (ex-showroom) | Warranty **2 years/24,000km**

Model **SXC**

Test Started **March 2025/561km**

Current ODO reading
1,227km

Mileage this month
666km

Efficiency this month
52kmpl

The biggest issue I am facing these days is the problem of whether to ride an ICE or EV! On the ICE front is the TVS Jupiter, which by far is one of the finest scooters money can buy in the country today. Our Jupiter has been doing the rounds for some time and I realised recently that TVS has loaded it with the best lighting package possible. The headlamp is strong and provides a good beam thus illuminating the road perfectly. I do not use high beam at all, but when needed it sure helps brighten things up. But what makes the Jupiter stand out is the DRL up front. Thanks to the stellar shade of blue, our scooter is draped in, the Jupiter looks absolutely amazing. It is also a bright colourway that ensure one is noticed even on the sunniest of days. You just can't miss this scooter on the road. The tail light too is an all-LED unit and looks amazing. As far as usability is concerned, it also ensures that visibility is top class. Adding to these 'beauty bits' is the suspension package. Sure it is a family scooter and does well to absorb bumps and potholes well. But push it hard and one can experience traits of the NTorq. I just love taking corners with the Jupiter and that is primarily because of the confidence it inspires. Seconds later, I can go back into family mode and enjoy the smooth ride home. Best of both worlds could not get better than this.

> WHAT MAKES THE JUPITER STAND OUT IS THE DRL UP FRONT. THANKS TO THE STELLAR SHADE OF BLUE

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The suspension does an amazing job of taking on the rough stuff. It also offers a good handling package

Mahindra to acquire 58.96 per cent stake in SML Isuzu

MAHINDRA & MAHINDRA announced that it has entered into an agreement to acquire a 58.96 per cent stake in SML Isuzu at Rs 650 per share, which is an outlay of Rs 555 crore. The proposed acquisition is a step towards establishing a strong presence in the >3.5T CV segment, where M&M has a three per cent market share, as compared to a 52 per cent market share in the <3.5T LCV segment. This acquisition is expected to double the market share to six per cent, with a plan to increase this to 10 - 12 per cent by FY31 and more than 20 per cent by FY36. Incorporated in 1983, SML Isuzu is a listed company with reported operating revenue of Rs 2,196 crore and EBITDA of Rs 179 crore in FY24. As part of the transaction, M&M would acquire the entire stake of 43.96 per cent held by Sumitomo Corporation, promoter of SML, and separately also acquire a 15 per cent stake held by Isuzu Motors Ltd, public shareholder of SML, for an aggregate consideration of Rs 555 crore. M&M would also launch a mandatory open offer for the acquisition of up to 26 per cent stake from eligible public shareholders of SML.

SML ISUZU X mahindra Rise

Maruti Suzuki launches updated Dzire Tour S

THE DZIRE had received a significant update last year, and this update has reached the commercially sold Tour S model as well. Just like before, the thoroughly updated model is based on the entry-level LXi variant, available for private buyers. In terms of safety features, the Tour S comes with six airbags, ABS with EBD, Electronic Stability Program, reverse parking sensor and other features. There's also a new 'Tour S' badge at the rear, and there's also an option to purchase the CNG-fitted model, which is priced at Rs 7.74 lakh (ex-showroom). The petrol-powered Dzire Tour S retails at Rs 6.79 lakh (ex-showroom), and is powered by the same 1.2-litre, three-cylinder petrol engine, which is sourced from the Dzire and Swift. This motor puts out 82bhp and 112Nm of torque, and is mated to a five-speed gearbox.

GreenLine Mobility receives $275 million investment for 10k Trucks

GREENLINE MOBILITY SOLUTIONS has received a $275 million (Rs 2,367 crore) investment for 10,000 LNG and EV trucks, 100 LNG refuelling stations, EV charging stations and battery swapping sites. The project aims to reduce emissions by 1 million tonnes annually in the nation's transport sector. It presently operates a fleet of over 650 LNG trucks that have reduced CO2 emissions by 10,000 tonnes.

JBM Electric Vehicles partners with Hitachi ZeroCarbon

JBM ELECTRIC VEHICLES, a wholly owned subsidiary of JBM Auto Ltd., has announced a strategic partnership with Hitachi ZeroCarbon to integrate ZeroCarbon BatteryManager into electric bus transportation. This unique partnership with Hitachi will help in providing real-world insight into the performance and resilience of electrified transport in an urban environment, with the hope of accelerating cost-effective and clean transport in Indian cities. In varied seasonal conditions in India and the Middle East, where weather can change from extreme heat to rain to near-zero temperatures, make it an ideal testbed to monitor and assess the performance of battery assets. Hitachi's ZeroCarbon BatteryManager will be deployed in JBM electric buses to collect real-time data from the pilot fleet and deliver actionable insights regarding charging patterns, route optimisation and asset usage. JBM electric buses were introduced in 2018, and since then, the company has clocked 150+ million e-kms, having served 1 billion bus commuters across the globe.

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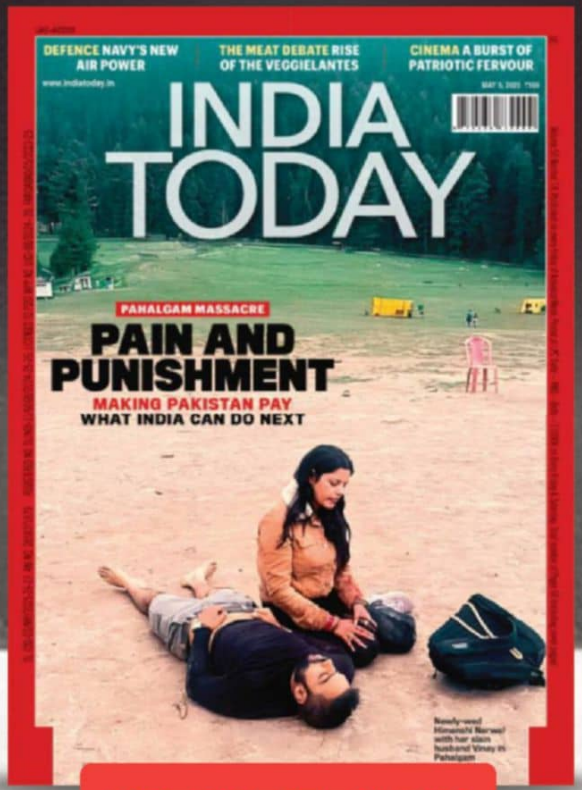
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